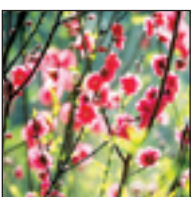


The coming of spring promises an abundance of blossom viewing opportunities for flower lovers.

Page 16



A needed break or restorative sugar fix is never far away at the two food lanes at Oriental Plaza.

Page 14



For wine connoisseur Carl Crook, the Cultural Revolution was a time of ease and coming of age.

Page 9



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Gas Explosion Kills Five Chinese in Turkey

Premier Wen Jiabao Wednesday urged the Chinese embassy in Turkey to properly handle the deaths of five Chinese miners in a Turkish coal mine gas explosion.

The explosion occurred on Tuesday morning local time in a coal mine in Zonguldak Province in northern Turkey, killing five Chinese miners working there and injuring two.

Premier Wen attached high importance to the issue and also asked the embassy to send his condolences. Chinese State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan also gave instructions to properly handle the issue.

According to the Foreign Ministry, the Chinese embassy in Turkey sent three officials to the accident site on Tuesday night, to inspect the bodies and visit the other Chinese workers and company staff.

The deceased Chinese workers have been identified as Chen Ping, Liu Guangjun, Ji Xianqing, Huang Jianhong and Yang Xinjian, according to an official from the Chinese embassy in Turkey.

The embassy has contacted the Turkish Foreign Ministry and the local business partner to inquire about the situation. The embassy staff are reportedly doing everything possible to work with relevant departments on details of the pensions for family members of the victims.

The victims were among some 80 Chinese workers in the province from the First Construction Corporation working for the State-owned coal giant China Coal.

(Edited by Xiao Rong)



One of the two injured miners receives medical treatment at a local hospital.

Xinhua Photo

Sudan Urged to Rescue Kidnapped Chinese

The Chinese government is urging the Sudanese government to rescue two kidnapped Chinese workers in Sudan, foreign ministry sources said Wednesday.

The two workers, from the North China Construction Company, were abducted by anti-Sudanese government militants on Saturday while drilling water wells some 80 kilometers from the western Sudan city of Buram.

The Foreign Ministry has instructed Chinese diplomats in Sudan to meet officials there to express China's concern.

Foreign ministry officials have also contacted the Sudanese ambassador to China, urging the Sudanese government to rescue the workers.

The Sudanese government has expressed deep regret for the incident and vowed to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety and immediate release of the two workers.

According to reports from Sudan, the two kidnapped workers, named Li Aijun and Jia Huipeng, are said to be in good condition.

(Edited by Xiao Rong)



Red turpentine beetles infest the trunk of a conifer in Shanxi Province.

Non-natives Challenge Green Beijing

By Xiao Rong

Two kinds of non-native pests might be threatening the biodiversity of Beijing.

Mainly occurring in areas close to Beijing, like Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi and Liaoning, the American white moth and red turpentine beetle have been found by scientists to be killers of local plants.

Zoologist and National People's Congress deputy Zhang Zhongning announced the above findings during the recently concluded 10th NPC conference. He also put forward a proposal for the establishment of a legislative system to prevent and control the introduction of alien species.

"We must first set a strict barrier for the introduction of alien species and then take measures to control the spread of invasive species," Zhang, who is also a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Zoology, told *Beijing Today* in an interview on Tuesday.

One road away from Beijing

A trip to Hebei Province last August to make an on-the-spot investigation for the Ministry of Forestry shocked Professor Zhang Zhongning.

"The sight of local plants damaged by the American white moth was really astonishing. Some trees have been totally stripped bare," Zhang said. Originally from North America, the American white moth was first introduced to northeast China's Liaoning Province and later spread to Shandong, Tianjin and Shaanxi.

According to Zhang, it can infest over 200 species of plants, including trees, crops and wild plants.

"The area where we carried out the investigation is on the boundary area between Hebei and Beijing. The infestation is just one road away from Beijing," Zhang said.

Another pest Zhang expressed concern about is the red turpentine beetle, which first appeared in Shanxi. This small, dark red insect, which also comes from the Americas, mainly infests the trunks of conifers. In the 20 years since the beetle's introduction to China, it has damaged over 6 million conifers.

"Conifers are one of the most common types of tree in Beijing, so before the 2008 Olympics, the city must take precautions against the threat of the red turpentine beetle," Zhang said.

Another potential threat to Green Beijing

As well as insects, alien plant species might also pose a threat to Beijing's ecosystem. The staghorn sumac, or vinegar tree, a deciduous shrubby tree with leaves that turn brilliant red in autumn is another non-native species originally introduced from North America in 1959 that thrives here at the expense of local natives.

Jiang Gaoming, professor at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Botany told *Beijing Today*, "The vinegar tree hasn't been confirmed to be an invasive alien species, because its impact on local biodiversity remains unknown. But we must still be cautious regarding the effects of its wide-spread introduction."

Jiang has found that this alien species has been widely introduced in areas outside the fourth and fifth ring roads, especially along both sides of the Badaling Expressway.

"Once the vinegar tree has been introduced and reproduced in a vast numbers, it could become an invasive alien species and pose a threat to native species in Beijing," Jiang said. "Besides, the red leaves of the vinegar tree cannot endure the frost as well as those of most native plants."

Jiang suggested that the ecosystem construction of the capital should conform to the basic principle of mainly utilizing local species, rather than introducing alien species.

"If most of the plants in a city are alien species, the city will lose its unique style. Different kinds of trees in a city must conform with the natural law of wildlife communities. In other words, we must learn to return nature to the city," Jiang said.

Collaborative network

Both Zhang Zhongning and Jiang Gaoming are working to prevent and control biological invasions that could threaten Beijing.

But what Zhang highlighted is the need for the establishment in China of a legislative system to prevent and control invasive alien species. The Environmental Protection Department of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2008 Olympic Games confirmed to *Beijing Today* that they had read Zhang's proposal and will give a formal response in the near future.

China has two separate regulations



The red leaves of the vinegar tree are a common sight around the outskirts of Beijing.



American white moth

An "invasive species" is defined as a species that is non-native to the ecosystem and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm, or harm to human health.

Invasive species can be plants, animals or other organisms, such as microbes. Increasingly, global trade and communication are directly contributing to the mixing of faunas and floras across bio-geographical boundaries.

Species suddenly introduced to new environments may fail to survive, but often they thrive, and become invasive. This process, together with habitat destruction, has been a major cause of the extinction of native species throughout the world in the past few hundred years. Today, there is an increasing realization of the ecological costs of biological invasion in terms of the irretrievable loss of native biodiversity.

The State Environmental Protection Administration announced in January 2003 a list of the first 16 confirmed invasive alien species that are estimated to have caused annual economic losses of 57.4 billion yuan to agriculture and forestry in China.

on the quarantine and inspection of plants or imported and exported goods. But according to Zhang, the enforcement of the regulations needs to be further strengthened.

"The official inspection on the introduction of alien species is the first barrier that should be emphasized. Then comes the surveillance system.

We must keep a close watch on all those introduced alien species, to guard against potential dangers," he said.

The proposed legislative system aims to punish those responsible for the introduction of invasive alien species and encourage those who succeed in controlling the spread of biological invasions, Zhang explained.

"Some government departments tend to introduce certain kinds of alien species out of the interests of their own departments. So the legislative system in preventing and controlling invasive alien species should be jointly drafted by relevant government organizations," said Xu.

In a telephone interview with *Beijing Today*, Xu Jia, director of the Science and Technology Department of the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Parks, explained in detail how the bureau has been focusing on preventing and controlling invasive alien species.

"To prevent the blind introduction of alien species, we long ago set up strict assessment procedures for introduced species, including quarantine, supervision, restricted cultivation and promotion," said Xu.

She added that the bureau has always been cautious in introducing alien plants while emphasizing the dominance of local species.

Though Beijing has not suffered from biological invasions as seriously as other parts of China, Xu stressed the importance of remaining alert to such threats.

In 2002, the Beijing Forestry Bureau set up a special team charged with preventing outbreaks of plant diseases. Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei will also launch a joint project next month aiming at eradicating American white moth.

"The protection of the ecosystem and biodiversity, which are the native merits of a city, are enormously important," said Jiang. The professor, who is also secretary-general of the China Biodiversity Conservation Foundation, has recently begun a project to assess Beijing's ecosystem.

In an effort to combine resources to strengthen supervision and control of invasive alien species, Professor Zhang Zhongning is also preparing to organize a joint meeting between the organizing committee for the Beijing Olympic Games, relevant government organizations and research institutes.

"Since Beijing has promised to host a best ever Olympics, we must try to minimize any potential risks, including the threat of invasive alien species. The importance of preventing and controlling possible biological invasions through a collaborative network can never be overemphasized," Zhang said.

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Closing NPC Session Adopts Constitutional Amendments

The annual session of China's top legislature, the National People's Congress (NPC), came to a close Sunday afternoon after adopting the draft amendment of the Chinese Constitution and resolutions on a series of relevant documents.

The Second Session of the 10th NPC, which opened on March 5, received a total of 1,374 motions from NPC delegations and deputies, a record high since the introduction of a motion delivery system at the First Session of the Sixth NPC in 1983.

A resolution on the Report of the Work of the Government was adopted at the closing meeting. The State Council, headed by Premier Wen Jiabao, has made 19 amendments to the report after deliberations on the proposals of

lawmakers and government advisors, according to the resolution.

On the self-improvement of the government, a full sentence is added: the government must improve its style of work, cut the number of meetings and documents, and spend more time and energy in field investigations and researches at the grass-root level.

Also at the meeting, NPC deputies voted to endorse the national economic and social development plan, the budget report, the work report of the NPC Standing Committee, the work report of the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate

A total of 2,903 deputies attended the closing meeting. The amendments to the constitution were adopted with an overwhelming

majority of 2,863 votes in favor, 10 against and 17 abstentions.

The clause on private property protection places private assets of Chinese citizens on an equal footing with public-sector property.

Other major points of the amendment include an expression of "respecting and protecting human rights," institution of the guiding role of the "Three Represents" important thought in national political and social life, expressions of coordinated development of material civilization and political and cultural progress, incorporation of the term "builders of socialism," and improvement of the land expropriation system.

Also included are expressions on the further clarification of the state

policy toward non-public economic sectors, improvement of the social security system and the NPC's composition, stipulations on the state of emergency, on the functions of the presidency and on revision of the terms of government at township level, and a stipulation on the national anthem.

Wu Bangguo, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, said at the closing meeting that the constitution was the core of China's legal system with Chinese characteristics, adding that "we should call on leading officials and state functionaries to study the constitution meticulously, further increase their awareness of the constitution and strive to maintain its authority effectively and guarantee that it is implemented validly."

(Xinhua)

Revision of City Planning Launched

By Yu Shanshan

An overhaul of Beijing's city planning blueprint has started and is due to be completed by the end of the year.

Based on research conducted by the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, Beijing Academy of Urban Planning and Design, and Tsinghua University, the new plan is an adjustment to 1993's Beijing General City Plan. The revision is intended to solve problems in the area of natural resources, transportation and public emergency procedure that have arisen as a result of economic development having surpassed expectations of a decade ago.

The research takes into consideration a wider area, including nearby Tianjin municipality and neighboring cities in Hebei Province. The new blueprint calls for a "dual-axis, dual-zone, multi-centered" pattern, and stresses four planning aspects, namely the overall layout of new urban areas and their function adjustment, transportation and infrastructure planning, environmental protection and the protection of cultural heritage areas.

Dual axis refers to the development of the north-south axis between Yongdingmen and Gulou (the Drum and Bell towers), and Chang'an Avenue and its extensions.

Dual zone refers to the eastern development zone, encompassing the new cities of Shunyi, Tongzhou and Yizhuang, and the western ecological zone, where Changping, Shahe, Changxindian and Huangcun serve as an ecological screen for central Beijing.

Multi-centered refers to the building of particular districts to serve different urban functions, such as the CBD, Olympic Green and Zhong-guancun high-tech district, in order to raise the city's service efficiency and ease traffic pressure through decentralization.

Female Astronaut Selection to Start in 2005

By Yu Shanshan

China will start selecting female astronauts from late 2005, according to vice general director of the Chinese human space flight program, Hu Shixiang. Hu revealed the news in an interview with Xinhua during the second session of the 10th National People's Congress last Friday. He revealed that the selection would be carried out nationwide, including applicants from Hong Kong and Macao.

"The first group of female astronauts would not necessarily be chosen from among the female pilots," Hu said, "Thanks to the five successful space flights from Shenzhou I to V, China has developed a mature technology in rocket launching, orbit flight and spacecraft return, which leads to a lower physical demand for astronauts. Therefore, after specific training, healthy people can also enter space, and women are no exception."

Hu also revealed that the first group of female astronauts would undergo three to four years of training, including physical training and instruction on scientific experimentation and research in space.



New regulations mean car owners will have a proper channel to express dissatisfaction with auto products.

Photo by Photocome

Auto Recall System Unveiled

The State Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine announced Monday management regulations on the recall of flawed automobile products. The new regulations are the first step in establishing a recall system to deal with unqualified goods in the auto sector.

According to the regulations, which will take effect from October 1, if automobile owners or users find flaws

in their vehicles, they can lodge complaints with relevant departments, as well as the manufacturers, distributors and importers. There are also provisions for individuals to forward suggestions to relevant departments to investigate recalling the vehicles.

In the event that automobile producers attempt to cover up or fail to report the flaws, relevant departments can urge them to recall their goods,

publicize their misconduct and impose a fine, according to the regulations.

An official from the administration said the recall system will protect consumers' interests and help automobile makers to improve the quality of their goods.

The recall system for flawed automobiles is intended to force auto makers and importers to remove flaws that may cause injury or economic loss, by way of repairing, changing parts or taking back whole vehicles.

(Xinhua)

Criteria Set to Evaluate Pilot Bank Reform

By Zhang Ran

A top Chinese banking regulator has unveiled measures to evaluate the widely-watched pilot reforms of two state-owned banks: Bank of China and China Construction Bank.

At a press conference last Thursday, Liu Mingkang, chairman of the China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC), elaborated on an appraisal system for reform the Bank of China and China Construction Bank, which were chosen late last year for pilot joint-stock restructuring and received a combined capital injection worth US \$45 billion.

The CBRC has set targets using seven benchmark indicators, such as the net return on equity and cost/revenue ratio, for the pilot banks to meet before 2007, Liu said. The criteria were set in accordance with the average level of the world's top 100

banks.

Liu also said that a strict accountability system will be established at the two banks to prevent moral hazards. Bank officials responsible for losses will be held accountable and great efforts will be made to prevent new intentional defaults by borrowers, Liu said.

Last year's recapitalization, following one in 1998, aimed to boost the pilot banks' capital adequacy levels in preparation for initial public offerings, but Liu said there is no need for a further recapitalization, citing the feasibility studies and other options, like bond issuance, to boost their capital bases.

Liu said the two pilot banks' non-performing loan ratios will both drop to around a healthy 4 percent after the ongoing restructuring ends, but did not give a timetable.

The Bank of China said earlier it

plans to reduce its bad loan ratio to 6 percent at the end of this year, compared to almost 16 percent at the end of January.

"That means the write-offs must be massive," said Yang Qingli, an analyst at CITIC Securities.

The pilot banks were reportedly allowed to use their old capital to write off part of their bad loans.

The CBRC's targets for the two banks are achievable, according to Yang, as they are not too high compared to foreign or even local counterparts.

Included in the conditions is a requirement for the two banks to bring their return on equity up to 11 percent by 2005 and 13 by 2007, which Yang noted is still lower than those reported by Pudong Development Bank and China Merchants Bank, both listed joint-stock lenders, last year.

Travel to Europe Heats Up

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Europe looks likely to be the destination of choice for Chinese heading overseas during May's Labor Day holiday week.

Northern Europe will be completely open to Chinese tourists, with Norway set to sign the Approved Destination Status, the last northern European country to do so. Meanwhile,

the tourism memorandum of understanding signed by the China National Tourism Administration and representatives of central European countries will come into effect on May 1, meaning central Europe will be open to Chinese tourists during the holiday for the first time.

A number of European Airlines, such as KLM Royal

Dutch Airlines, Air France, Austrian Airlines Group and Lufthansa have already added or plan to increase flights between major cities in China and Europe.

China Eastern Airlines is currently offering Shanghai-London return tickets for 4,000 yuan, while Scandinavian Airlines is offering for one month economy class return tickets for 5998 yuan and business class for 17,000 yuan.

Major travel services are also preparing to increase the range of group tours to European destinations, which is expected to be a new growth point for the tourism industry.

Chinese tourists going through designated travel agencies will benefit from facilitated procedures for visas from 12 member states of the European Union as a result of Approved Destination Status agreements.

Public Security Review

According to Beijing's 110 emergency hotline service, thefts accounted for 77 percent of criminal cases reported last week. Most of these were break-ins, auto thefts and pickpocketing.

Break-ins mainly occurred at night or in the early morning around Hepingli and Andingmen in Dongcheng District; Changqiao in Xicheng District; Guangwai in Xuanwu District; Nanmofang, Gaobeidian, Anzhenli and Shuangjing in Chaoyang District; Qinglongqiao and Sijiqing in Haidian District; Taipingqiao, Liuliqiao, Dahongmen in Fengtai District; and Pingguoyuan and Babaoshan in Shijingshan District.

The majority of auto thefts occurred in Tiyuqian Lu, Chongwen District; Balizhuang, Panjiayuan and Laiguangying in Chaoyang District; the Wanshou Temple area, Qinglongqiao and Qinghe in Haidian District and Fengtai Country in Fengtai District.

Instances of pickpocket theft mainly occurred during daylight hours at Anzhenli, Chaowai and Panjiayuan in Chaoyang District; and Sijiqing and Cuiwei Lu in Haidian District.

Police also issued a warning to people seeking to rent apartments. Several cases of attempted fraud or extortion have been reported, and police urged house-hunters to use qualified rental agencies

(Information from Beijing Public Security Bureau)

BDA Begins International Recruitment

By Zhang Ran

Beijing Economic Technological Development Area (BDA) is expanding its human resources capability to what it describes as an international level.

According to spokesman Zhao Yajuan, a 15-day online worldwide recruitment program was launched on March 12, aiming to attract 24 qualified applicants in areas such as project investment, foreign affairs management, information management, area economy, construction, urban planning, and market analysis. Among the 24, five will be appointed as heads of key departments.

The BDA is seeking master or doctorate degree holders with related working experience. Applicants who have experience working overseas with good leadership and communication skills are especially welcome, Zhao says.

"Since March 12, there have been many enquiries about recruitment every day," Zhao told *Beijing Today*. He also said that a news conference would be held next week to further publicize recruitment information.

Specific requirements for applicants will be publicized in *Beijing Daily*, *Beijing Youth Daily* and on the websites www.bda.gov.cn and www.people.com.

Multinational Mergers Speed Up

By Yu Shanshan

Beijing Equity Exchange signed an agreement with Beijing Municipal Investment Promotion Bureau last Thursday to set up a "high-speed way for multinational mergers."

The system is intended to provide domestic and international investors with a more convenient and faster platform and service for investing and finance processes.

According to Zhang Jifu, vice director of Beijing Investment Promotion Bureau, the bureau, with its governmental background and resource advantages, can directly input projects to Beijing Equity Exchange during its communication with international investors. Both institutes would share projects, members and information, and together provide international investors with policy consultancy and instruction, give aid to clients in transferring or altering stock ownership, coordinate the relationship between governmental departments and enterprises, and help speed up approvals of international merger projects.

Daxing Pioneers Rural Endowment Insurance

By Zhang Ran

Officials from Beijing's Daxing District announced Sunday the launch of a new type of rural endowment insurance system from April.

The insurance is available to all rural residents over the age of 16, according to Shen Baochang, National People's Congress delegate and Daxing's general party secretary.

Zhao Yusheng, a resident of Efang, a village in Daxing, told *Beijing Today*, "It is a good thing for peasants to have rural endowment insurance."

The key features of the new type of insurance are minimized payments devised in accordance with the lowest living expense level and its availability to be purchased using money from a personal account as well as allowances from rural collective income and government fiscal income.

Shen said that government has promised an annual allowance for issuance buyers. A total 30 million yuan from the local government will be invested in the application of the new endowment system.

MetLife Flight Insurance Monopoly Move Blocked

Domestic firms force negotiations on continued policy sales at Capital Airport

By Shan Jinliang

Domestic insurers are sighing in relief since a group of 19 insurance firms succeeded in temporarily blocking the plans of Sino-US MetLife Insurance to monopolize the market for flight insurance policies at Beijing Capital Airport on Monday.

The battle began on March 5 when the airport's administration announced that only Sino-US MetLife Insurance would get the green light to sell policies at the airport as of this Monday. Previously, flight insur-

ance policies were sold by the Beijing Association of Insurance Industry, a group of 19 companies who shared the airport's policy sales windows.

Sino-US MetLife Insurance Corporation, a 50-50 joint venture of US Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and the airport, was established in September 2003, but has not yet opened for business.

The airport confirmed its decision at an emergency meeting with association representatives on March 10. The

association immediately responded by accusing Sino-US MetLife of trying to set up a monopoly, forcing the airport to negotiate on the matter.

Facing increasing pressure from the association and other interests, Sino-US MetLife Insurance released a statement on Sunday announcing it would postpone the sale of its policies until all negotiations had concluded. According to an article in the *Beijing Morning Post* on Monday, the Beijing Insurance Regulatory

Office has been brought in to mediate the dispute.

Wang Jiadong, general manager of the airport, told the China News Agency on Monday that the airport chose Sino-US MetLife simply on the basis of the strength of its services.

Before his statement, other airport leaders had told the press that the one-company policy at the airport did not constitute a monopoly because flight insurance policies could also be purchased at outside air ticket dealers and travel agents.

In an interview broadcast Tuesday on China Central Television, Wang Qianhu, director of the Complaints and Legal Affairs Department of the China Consumers' Association, said, "The presence of only one insurance firm at the airport would violate the Law Against Unfair Competition. Air travelers mostly buy flight accident insurance at airports. Moreover, because Sino-US MetLife is half-owned by the airport, the decision was likely in violation of the law."

Beer Battle Brewing in Southeast

By Shan Jinliang

China Resources Brewery Corporation made its first step into the southeastern China market last Wednesday as part of its plans to go nationwide. Some media analysts have speculated the move also represents the company's intention to compete with and grab share of market from rival Beijing-based Yanjing Beer.

On March 10, China Resources Brewery signed a contract to pay 300 million yuan for a 70 percent stake in Zhejiang-based Qianjiang Beer, based in Hangzhou. Qianjiang brewed 250,000 tons of beer last year and is the first beer maker in Southeast China to be purchased by China Resources.

The buy came two weeks after Yanjing Beer's acquisition of another Zhejiang-based brewery, Bihu Beer, for 27.6 million yuan. That relatively small brewery has an annual production capacity of 10,000 tons of beer.

According to a report in *Beijing Business Today* last Friday, the two acquisitions are clear signs of a brewing war for the lucrative market of Zhejiang Province and neighboring regions.

However, both companies have been more cautious in explaining their moves. Ding Guangxue, Yanjing Beer deputy general manager told *Beijing Today* by phone on Tuesday that Qianjiang Beer was located in Xiaoshan City while Bihu Beer was in Lishui City, meaning they were not poised for direct competition. China Resources has issued a statement that its acquisition of Qianjiang was simply a step in implementing its national business strategy.

Since entering the industry in 1994, China Resources Brewery, a subsidiary of China Resources Group, has become one of the top three brewers in China. Its main competitors are Yanjing and Qingdao-based Tsingdao Beer.

The newcomer has acquired major local breweries around China and now owns and operates 35 different brands, including Snow Beer and Blue Ribbon.

China Resources Group General Manager Ning Gaoning told the press last Wednesday that the company's annual beer production capacity would reach 4.56 million tons after the acquisition.

Electrolux Goes Wholly Foreign Owned

By David Huang

Electrolux Electronics Hangzhou Corporation changed its name to Electrolux Electronics China last Friday, marking the completion of its transition into a wholly foreign owned enterprise.

The news was released by Tang Jiadun, Electrolux Electronics China president last Friday in Shanghai. He noted, "This is symbolic of the company's strategic adjustment in China."

The company effectively became wholly foreign owned when Electrolux purchased the 40 percent stake in its China business

owned by former Chinese partner Zhongyi Refrigerator.

Sweden-based Electrolux, the world's largest producer of kitchen appliances, entered the Chinese market in 1997. In the past few years, competition in the sector has heated up due to the rise of strong Chinese appliance makers and the arrival of more foreign companies.

Tang said last Friday that his company was planning to invest 400 million yuan in China this year, of which 125 million yuan would go towards research and development and 250 million yuan towards mar-

keting. He added the Electrolux's goal for 2004 was to raise its share of the China market by three percent.

Huo Dufang, chairman of the China Home Appliances Association told Guangzhou-based *Information Daily* on Tuesday that moving toward full foreign ownership was a common trend among foreign appliance makers. Several foreign companies, including Siemens and Panasonic, have succeeded in turning their former joint venture enterprises into wholly foreign-owned companies since Chinese regulation changes opened the door to doing so in the late 1990s.



Thousands flocked to the new Carrefour store in Zhongguancun on Wednesday.

Photo by Jacky

Carrefour Finally Opens China Flagship Store

Top foreign retail investor starts cautious expansion in domestic market

By Shan Jinliang

French retailer Carrefour opened its fifth and largest store in Beijing in the Zhongguancun area on Wednesday after delaying the store's debut three times since last October.

The official opening date was made public at a corporate meeting two days before, Yin Zhuang, public relations manager of Shanghai-based Carrefour China Corporation, told the press on Tuesday.

An article in the *Beijing Evening News* on Tuesday speculated that the sudden opening indicated Carrefour was trying to shore up its share of market before the flagship store of rival US-based PriceSmart began business near Tsinghua University in the next few months.

The new Zhongguancun Carrefour store occupies a massive 11,600 square meters of underground space and houses 51 small stores, such as

food and drink stands, clothes stalls, a beauty salon and even a Bertelsmann book club. The store represents the French retailer's flagship outlet not only in China, but in the whole Asia market.

Carrefour China first revealed its plans to open the Zhongguancun store to the domestic press last October, but no further news was issued until February, when the company explained the opening had been delayed due to insufficient preparation. According to a report in Beijing-based *Market Daily* on March 5, the delay may have caused losses of up to 10 million yuan for the company.

That article also attributed the postponement to government policies towards foreign retailers, not to the company's strategic plans. Since the late 1990s, some local governments have allowed foreign companies to own more than 50-per-

cent stakes in their Chinese joint ventures in violation of national regulations.

Early last month, Carrefour China received approval to open new stores in China after reducing its stakes in branches in Beijing, Chongqing and Wuxi. The company opened its first store in Urumqi, Xinjiang Autonomous Region, on February 17.

Some industry analysts have speculated that Carrefour China is ready to carry out cautious expansion this year and the company is expected to open 12 new stores in 2004.

In good news for all international retailers, Vice Minister of Commerce Zhang Zhigang announced on Tuesday in Beijing that China would abolish restrictions regarding regions, shares and outlet numbers currently saddling foreign companies as of December 11.

First Group of Olympic Hotels Named

By Hou Mingxin

Seven local five-star hotels signed the Olympic Lodging Agreement with the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) yesterday in Beijing, making them the first hotels to get official Olympic partner bragging rights.

The names of the hotels were announced at an event held in the century-old Beijing Hotel, one of the select seven. The six other hotels are the China World Hotel, Grand Hotel Beijing, Hong Kong Macao Centre Swisshotel, Beijing International Hotel, Kunlun Hotel and Crown Plaza Park View Wuzhou Beijing.

According to the agreement, the seven hotels will provide accommodations to accredited people from the Olympic Family, sponsors and the media. At the time of the 2008 Beijing Games, the seven hotels are to keep a total of 3,500 rooms available for BOCOG's use.

In line with the Olympic Charter and the Host City Contract, BOCOG needs to provide 22,000 suitable hotel rooms for accredited people during the Games. To reach that figure, the committee will sign similar agreements with another 70 premier local hotels this year.

Ito-Yokada Rumored to Seek Expansion

Japan's Ito-Yokada Corporation reportedly announced on Monday in Japan that it was planning to go into business with the Beijing Wangfujing Department Store to explore the retailing market in China and was awaiting approval from the central government.

However, Huatang Ito-Yokado, a joint venture of Ito-Yokado in Beijing, and the Beijing Wangfujing Department Store both said they had never heard about such plans.

Li Zhisheng, a manager at Huatang Ito-Yokado, said that international companies are naturally attracted to China's booming market, where retail sales rose nine percent to 4.47 trillion yuan (\$540 billion) last year. Huatang Ito-Yokado currently operates three huge general merchandise stores in Beijing, selling clothes and other daily goods along with supermarket fare.

"Two other outlets are under construction and expected to be launched in December and next February," Li said.

According to Ito-Yokado spokesman Yasuo Takaha, the retail conglomerate will engage in a partnership with Wangfujing Department Store to establish a food-only supermarket in China. (Xinhua)

Construction Bank Names IPO Underwriters

China Construction Bank, the nation's third-largest lender, has hired China International Capital Corp, Citigroup and Morgan Stanley for its \$5 billion initial public offering, bankers involved said last Friday.

Construction Bank sent the banks letters that day confirming their appointments, three months after they made presentations in Beijing to win the business, said the bankers, who asked not to be identified.

Construction Bank and Morgan Stanley are the biggest shareholders of China International Capital. Deutsche Bank AG and J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. also competed to manage the IPO.

Investment banks are chasing underwriting fees worth about \$450 million as China plans to sell more than \$15 billion of stocks including banks, airlines and telecommunications companies this year. Construction Bank's sale may generate \$175 million in fees, based on a standard 3.5 percent commission.

Construction Bank's sale may be the biggest in the world this year and the biggest IPO in Asia outside Japan since China Unicom raised \$5.65 billion in June 2000.

The bank's sale will determine the pace of fund-raising by China's three other biggest banks, the Bank of China, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and the Agricultural Bank of China, which together accounted for 80.74 percent of all lending in this country at the end of last year. (Xinhua)

Avon Breaks Up with Masson

By Jack Pan

US-based Avon Corporation announced to the press on Monday that it would purchase former Chinese partner Masson Group's 20 percent stake in their joint venture, Avon China Corporation, for \$50 million to make the company wholly foreign owned.

According to a report in Guangzhou-based *Information Daily* on Monday, an Avon China representative said the two sides were discussing details of the purchase plan and the final agreement would require the approval of the Chi-

nese government.

Avon Greater China President SK Kao told the *Beijing News* on Tuesday that Avon China would become a wholly foreign funded enterprise after the deal was sealed, adding it was the proper time for the company to conclude its relationship with Masson.

Another *Information Daily* article on Wednesday reported quoted Masson Group General Manager Huang Benjian as saying it the conclusion of cooperation would be a win-win deal, since Masson would profit from the share sale.

Victorious Putin Pledges Action

Moscow, March 15 (Reuters) - President Vladimir Putin, fresh from a resounding election win for a second Kremlin term, showed his trademark "business as usual" style on Monday after pledging to drive the economy forward and improve Russians' lives.

Putin's predictable victory on Sunday over five rivals was not expected to move markets focused on months ahead when Putin's resolve to cut red tape and roll back the economy's chronic dependence on oil exports is put to the test.

"I will meet top officials on Monday as usual, hold several working meetings with colleagues from different ministries and have several telephone conversations with foreign colleagues," Itar-Tass news agency quoted Putin as saying.

With nearly all votes counted, Putin won 71 percent of votes - enough for an outright victory. His closest rival, communist Nikolai Kharitonov scored 13.8 percent.



Speaking to reporters in his election headquarters early on Monday, Putin pledged tangible gains for voters.

"I promise you that all democratic gains of our people will without any doubt be upheld and guaranteed. And we shall not stop with what has been achieved. We shall strengthen the multi-party system," he said.

Putin also vowed to uphold media freedom and ensure stable growth of the economy. His key policy aim is to modernize a country in which a quarter of 145 million

residents are below the poverty line.

"This has to be done carefully so as not to damage or undermine people's confidence in what we are doing," he said.

Putin's victory was never in doubt. But liberals alleged he monopolized state-run television and limited media freedom.

Media Report:

Russia's new government faces onerous economic tasks.

Russia has seen its economy on the rise in recent years thanks mainly to the high prices in the international energy market. However, the economic revival can not mask the long-standing structural problems in the country's economic system.

Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov suggested focusing more on the development of high-tech industry, and the government is considering setting up a renovation mechanism to support the growth of the sector with preferential treatment in budget and

taxation policies.

Further regulating economic order and fighting against corruption to facilitate more legal and standard economic activities will be another pressing task for the government.

Other priorities include regulating the taxation system and the exploitation and use of natural resources, as well as promoting agricultural development.

Observers here noted that Putin has made big headway in maintaining social stability and stable economic growth over the past four years and seems determined to pursue a substantial reform in his next term.

The incumbent state leader vowed last year to double Russia's gross domestic product in ten years, improve people's living standards and alleviate poverty, a formidable task that requires the new government to make breakthroughs in tough reforms in the upcoming four years.

- Xinhua



Roh Moo-hyun

South Korea to Reassure Investors

Seoul, March 13 (Reuters) - South Korea underscored its concern on Sunday to keep its economy on track by saying its finance minister would travel to New York, London and Hong Kong to reassure investors after parliament impeached the president.

Tens of thousands of people waving candles protested peacefully in Seoul on Saturday against Roh's impeachment, and police said another rally was scheduled for 0900 GMT on Sunday.

The opposition-ruled parliament stunned many and thrust the country into uncertainty last week by impeaching President Roh Moo-hyun for breaking an election law. The Constitutional Court has six months to decide whether to uphold the vote, and Prime Minister Goh Kun is acting president during that time.

Goh, a 66-year-old veteran bureaucrat, called for calm and urged military forces facing the communist North to be vigilant.

Foreign investors closely watch political stability in South Korea, which already faced a standoff over North Korea's nuclear ambitions and the task of coaxing Asia's fourth-largest economy back to full recovery after a consumer credit bubble burst.

Finance Minister Lee Hun-jai will visit major finance centers before the end of March for an investor relations trip that had been planned before the vote but has taken on added significance.

"Impeachment was something that we never expected," Choi Joong-kyung, chief of the Finance Ministry's international finance bureau, told Reuters.

"The ministry will proceed with economic policy regardless of the political situation," he said of the trips to New York, Hong Kong and London.

South Korean financial markets reacted sharply to the vote, with stocks and the won falling sharply and investors seeking the safe haven of bonds on Friday.



A South Korean protester holds a candle as police officers stand guard at a rally supporting impeached President Roh Moo-hyun in Seoul, March 15. AP Photos



March 16 (TechWeb) - Starbucks Corp. on Tuesday launched a CD-burning service in its first Hear Music Coffeehouse in Santa Monica, California.

Hear Music, Starbucks' branded digital

music-delivery service that's backed by technology from Hewlett-Packard, is the coffee-shop chain's attempt to bring together mochas and music. In the Santa Monica store, Starbucks has deployed 70 HP Tablet PCs and staffs a "listening bar"

with music experts who recommend new tunes and artists.

Customers can listen to track previews, much as they can in music stores, then use the Tablet PCs to compile a collection and burn a custom CD.

Japan and Mexico Sign FTA

March 13 (Japan Times) - Japan and Mexico reached a final agreement Friday on a bilateral free-trade agreement, but postponed a decision on tariffs for some Mexican farm products.

Ending nearly 16 months of bitter negotiations, the two countries will aim to put the pact into effect in January, Japanese government officials said.

"I am positive that (the pact) will serve Japan's national interest," trade minister Shoichi Nakagawa told reporters after the agreement was made via a ministerial teleconference late Friday.

The deal would phase out barriers on certain Japanese exports to Mexico, and lower those on Mexican pork, chicken, beef, oranges and

orange juice imports.

Japanese tariffs on three Mexican products - chicken, beef and oranges - will remain at zero for the first year or two within the annual low-tariff quota of 10 tons each. The quotas will be expanded after the transitional period. But the two sides postponed deciding on what the tariffs will be until after the transitional periods.

The tariffs on about 380 Mexican agricultural products will be eliminated.

The delay on the three Mexican items stems from Japanese officials' fear that they might antagonize farm groups ahead of ongoing trade talks with Asian nations, a senior farm ministry official said.

"Lowering trade barriers

even a notch is loaded with symbolic implications," he said. "We do not know how many Mexican farm products will come into Japan, so we want to be careful before deciding on a rate."

The sensitivity of even reform-minded government officials to farmers' interests points to the long road still ahead before Japan's farm market is opened.

Japan is currently in talks with Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and South Korea.

Media Report:

For Mexico, Japan is the eighth most important source of foreign direct investment in the world and imports 60 percent of its food. The FTA is expected to increase Mexican exports to Japan by 10.6 percent.

At the same time, the agreement would reduce costs for Japanese exporters by 400 billion yen (US\$3.6 billion) annually, according to the estimation of Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. The current average tariff imposed on Japanese exporters stands at 16 percent, making them less competitive against those from the 32 countries, including the United States and European Union, that have concluded such an agreement with Mexico.

Japan signed an FTA with Singapore in 2002, and is moving to conclude the same deals with four Asian nations - South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

The pact with Mexico signaled the first time Japan had agreed to a comprehensive free trade package that involves the agricultural sector.

- Xinhua

Microsoft Mired in EU

Brussels, March 15 (Reuters) - European Union states on Monday unanimously threw their weight behind a landmark ruling against Microsoft that would find it broke antitrust law and seek changes in how it sells audiovisual software.

Microsoft also faces the prospect of a fine expected to run into hundreds of millions of euros as part of the European Commission's sanctions against the company. Microsoft is certain to appeal any EU decision it does not like. Microsoft shares were down 0.7 percent at \$25.20 in morning trading in New York.

The EU advisory commit-

tee's views are not binding but make chances of a settlement more remote with only nine days until a final decision by the full European Commission.

The Commission draft backed by the experts requires that Microsoft provide computer makers with a second version of Windows stripped of built-in audiovisual software, people close to the case said.

Microsoft spokesman Tom Brookes said after the meeting that the company was still working to find a settlement with the Commission. But a competition expert saw a compromise as being tough.

The EU advisory committee

will meet again on March 22 to decide whether to endorse the proposed fine, with the Commission's final ruling coming two days later. The Commission fine-tuned the decision to stand up to scrutiny by EU courts in Luxembourg.

Microsoft acknowledges that Windows, which runs on nearly all personal computers, is dominant. The Commission draft says the company abused that dominance in two areas, sources say.

Background:

First, Microsoft tried to hurt rival makers of audiovisual software by bundling its Windows Media Player with Windows.

The draft requires Microsoft to ship two versions of Windows to computer

makers, which account for most sales of the operating system, for installation in computers sold in Europe.

One version would have Microsoft Windows Media Player tied in as it is now, the other would have it stripped out.

Second, the draft says Microsoft has given rival makers of low-level servers too little information to compete.

As a result, Microsoft's low-level servers, performing tasks such as printing and file handling, work better with Windows.

The draft decision says the US firm must share more of its protocols with rivals, charging a reasonable royalty. It will be left to Microsoft to work out the precise solution, with close oversight by the Commission.

- Xinhua

Tech Jobs Head Overseas

New York, March 18 (AFP) - One out of every four high-technology jobs in developed countries today may be outsourced to emerging markets like India by 2010, according to a report by the research firm Gartner Inc.

"Global sourcing is becoming a mainstream delivery model," said Ian Marriott, vice president at Gartner, at a Barcelona symposium and released by Gartner Wednesday. "The potential cost advantages are so persuasive that companies that don't consider it seriously risk doing their shareholders a disservice," he said.

Plan to Rescue Parmalat

Rome, March 17 (AP) - The court-appointed turnaround expert at Parmalat, the dairy giant engulfed in a fraud scandal, outlined a plan Tuesday to rescue the Italian company, proposing slashing the number of brands from 120 to 30 and concentrating on "healthy lifestyle" foods.

The administrator, Enrico Bondi, of Parmalat Finanziaria SpA, presented highlights of the plan to a government-appointed surveillance committee.

The three-year plan envisions Parmalat as "centrally coordinated, a leaner, more competitive and more efficient business whose primary objective will be the creation of value for its shareholders," the company said on its website.



Saudi Prince Talal bin Abdul Aziz

"Bank for the Poor" Launched

Riyadh, March 17 (AFP) - The first "bank for the poor" in the Arab world has been set up in Yemen under an agreement signed here, the official SPA news agency reported.

The accord was signed by Saudi Prince Talal bin Abdul Aziz, a half-brother of King Fahd who heads the Arab Gulf Program for UN Development Organizations (AGFUND), and Yemeni Labor and Social Affairs Minister Abdul Karim al-Arhabhi.

"Bank of Hope," as it has been dubbed, will be funded by AGFUND and contributions from Arab countries.

This "banking system will allow the poor increasingly to become partners of the bank and shareholders," Prince Talal said, adding that Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan had agreed to set up similar banks.

Banks in Good Shape - Greenspan

Washington, March 17 (AP) - The US banking system weathered the last recession well and is now in good shape to provide the credit needed for an expanding economy, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said Wednesday.

Greenspan told a convention of the Independent Community Bankers of America that problems banks experienced from bad loans in the last recession were mild compared to previous downturns. As a result, he said, the banking industry was "strong and well-positioned to meet customer needs for credit and other financial services."

Greenspan said that over the past three years the banking industry has enjoyed an extended string of high and often record quarterly earnings and a robust growth in assets.

Oil at 13 Year High

New York, March 17 (Reuters) - US oil gushed up to the highest closing price in over 13 years on Wednesday as a drop in already low gasoline inventories sharpened the threat of a supply crunch that could hurt economic growth.

It was the highest settlement for US crude since October 1990.

Prices jumped after the Energy Information Administration, an arm of the US Department of Energy, released its latest snapshot on the world's biggest oil market. The report showed a further 800,000 barrels decline in gasoline stocks to 199.6 million barrels.

Hotline Offers Aid to Victims of Abuse

By Wang Xiaoxiao

With the March 5 launch of "April Day," the country's first hotline offering sexual abuse counseling, women who have been sexually abused finally have an outlet for their grief and a place to turn for advice and support from a group of well-trained psychologists and counselors.

The service was set up and is being operated by the psychology department of Beijing Forestry University.

The hotline is absolutely free and open to calls from 6:30 pm to 9 pm every Wednesday and Sunday evening. The group of counselors manning the call center consists of 12 women and three men, all psychologists. Considering the nature of the service, however, the men do no answer the phones.

According to counseling group leader He Minghua, more than 200 calls have come in since the hotline began operating two weeks ago.

"Most incidents of sexual abuse happen to women when they are younger than 25. Many married women have called us to talk about incidents from earlier in their lives. It's clear that they have been suffering mentally from the abuse for years. That is precisely why we decided to set up the hotline," counselor Wu Qin told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday.

Yuan Yuan, another counselor and a teacher in the psychology department at the Central

University of Finance and Economics said, "Sexual abuse is still very common, reflecting the problems that exist in sex education in China, women's lack of awareness of the problem and their difficulties in protecting themselves. Some women who have been abused don't even know it, or know to call it abuse. We counsel women to be brave in facing this problem – sexual offenders may be frightened off if a woman is strong and not afraid of them."



When the Lei family's ancient boat-shaped tomb once stood there is now only a hold in the ground.

Photo by Huang Liang

Imperial Architects' Tombs Mistakenly Destroyed

By Dong Nan

The tombs of several members of the Lei family, known as the greatest architects of the Qing Dynasty (1644 – 1911) and the designers of many imperial buildings in Beijing, were quietly razed on Monday night.

The tombs were located in Jushan village, Sijiqing, Haidian District. On Monday, Lei Guanping, the twelfth generation of the famous family, went to the tombs to pay her respects and was shocked to see the tombs had been completely flattened.

There were around 10 workers at the site. They told Lei that the plot of land had been rented by the Sijiqing govern-

ment to a local architectural company as an open area for storing construction materials.

The head of the architectural company, who asked that he and his company not be identified, told *Beijing Youth Daily* that he and his colleagues had no idea that the tombs held anyone of significance. He said that the company halted all work as soon as they heard the news.

The Sijiqing government made an announcement on local cable TV in late 2003 calling for the reconstruction of Jushan village and the removal of all tombs in the area before 2004.

On Tuesday, the Beijing Cultural Relics Bureau an-

nounced the architectural firm had stopped the demolition and would wait for bureau to investigate and issue a judgment on the case before continuing any work.

According to Lei, her ancestors' tombs were shaped like a big boat intended to carry their souls back to the family home in Jiangxi Province.

The tombs sustained heavy damage during the Cultural Revolution and were all but completely collapsed before Monday's accidental leveling.

"The Leis were the pride of Beijing and China. There is probably not another family in the world that was engaged in the designing of top imperial build-

ings for 200 years. We should protect their tombs," Wang Qiheng, professor of architecture at Tianjin University told *Beijing Youth Daily*. He added that he had already appealed to the Cultural Relics Bureau to restore and protect the tombs.

The first of the family's great architects was Lei Fada (1619 - 1693), who participated in the rebuilding of the Forbidden City.

Over the following six generations, Leis worked on the design, construction and protection of many major imperial structures, such as the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace, the Summer Resort at Chengde and the Western and Eastern Qing Tombs.

Wild Wall Gets Makeover

By Chen Ying

The Huanghuacheng Great Wall Repair Project, the first step in the restoration of the lengthy landmark since the municipal government issued the Beijing Great Wall Protection and Management Measures last year, kicked off on Tuesday.

More than 12 million yuan will be spent on the three-phase project to repair the four-kilometer section of wall near a small village in Huairou County. The first section should be restored and opened to visitors before National Day, October 1. The project will simply focus on preserving, strengthening and reinforcing the existing wall

and towers to make sure the area is secure without adding any new structures.

The Huanghuacheng Great Wall is known as the "Wild Wall," since it is technically off-limits to tourists, though it has been listed in the *Lonely Planet China* guidebook. The Beijing Municipal Government plans to run similar reconstruction campaigns at the Chadaocheng, Gu-beikou and Simatai sections in the near future. Nearly 630 kilometers of the Great Wall runs through Beijing municipality, but many parts are in poor condition and only the Badaling, Mutianyu, Juyongguan and Simatai sections have been officially opened to visitors.

Chess Star Vexed in Name Game

By Jiang Yongzhu

Chinese chess master Zhu Chen is upset about an American company plans to capitalize on her name.

"I was so surprised to hear that my name would become a brand. No one ever asked my permission for that," the 2002 Women's World Chess Champion told *Beijing Youth Daily* on Sunday. Zhu learned from a friend a few days before that the East Coast Chamber of Commerce, a company based in Wilmington, Delaware that mostly manufactures sports equipment, was trying to register her name as a trademark and had appointed the Beijing Trademark and Patent Agency (BTA) as their agent in China.

BTA representative Cai Jun said the American company wanted to register the name Zhu Chen in both Chinese characters and pinyin for a line of new sports products targeted at the domestic market. He added that his agency had filed a trademark application with the brand department of the China National Industry and Commerce Administration Bureau in November last year and the application was accepted on December 17.

According to an official sur-named Lu from that department, after applications are accepted and filing companies are investigated, potential trademarks and brands are listed on the Chinese Trademark and Brand Announcement. If no objections are filed to a listed trademark within three months of its posting, the registration will go through.

Lu noted that companies do



Zhu Chen

Photo by Photocome

not have to receive permission to register their individuals' names as brands because there are no such clauses in national law.

Cai told *Beijing Youth Daily* that the announcement had yet to be published. "If Zhu Chen does not file any objections within three months, the brand with her name will belong to the American company," he said. If an objection is raised, officials from the brand office will judge whether the potential trademark constitutes a violation of Zhu's personal rights.

A lawyer surnamed Wei from the Zhejiang Jinhui Trademark and Patent Agency estimated that Zhu's name could be worth millions of yuan, according to a report in Zhejiang Province-based *Wenzhou City Daily* on Sunday.

"I am meeting with a lawyer regarding the case and will stand up to protect the rights to my name," Zhu told *Beijing Youth Daily*.

Cut-Price Saplings

By Zhang Ran

A tree farmer from outside Beijing is working to drum up interest in 280,000 ginkgo saplings he wants to sell in the capital for a mere 600,000 yuan.

Liu Juhe, 61, of Zhuozhou, Hebei province, originally planned to donate the young ginkgo trees to Beijing last Friday, Arbor Day. After careful consideration, however, he decided to at least cover most of his costs in turning over the saplings, hopefully to local companies interested in improving the environment and air of this city.

He asked his eldest daughter to call *Beijing Youth Daily* on March 12 to express his intention to give away the trees. She explained that he had to give up the saplings for health reasons. The paper announced his intended gift the next day, by which time he had already changed his mind.

"My original plan was too rash. After I thought it over, I decided it would be better to sell them at a very low price than to get no money at all," Liu

told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday. "I still consider it a donation, though, because the price I'm asking is far below the trees' actual value."

In 2001, Liu, a retired military doctor, bought the 280,000 saplings from Jiangsu Province for a price of 2 yuan each and planted them in a two-hectare area in the Shijiatun area of Zhuozhou. His intention was to harvest and sell of the ginkgos' leaves and fruits, which can be used in traditional Chinese medicines for treating hypertension.

His plan was derailed, however, when he developed serious heart problems shortly after putting the trees into soil. Liu plans to go the US in May to receive treatment.

"I want to contribute to the improvement of Beijing's environment, but I also would like to have some money to repay the villagers who helped me a lot when I was planting the trees," he said. Liu also plans to ask buyers to contribute towards the construction of a new kindergarten in Zhuozhou.



Liu Juhe stands among his ginkgo babies.

Photo by Cao Boyuan

Impatient Passenger Causes Fatal Accident

By Sun Ming

Three people died and 27 were injured when an anxious passenger tried to grab the steering wheel from the driver of a long-distance bus on Monday, leading to a serious accident 37 kilometers outside central Beijing on the Jingshen Highway.

Dong Shubin, 46, wanted to get off the bus carrying 44 people from Beijing to Shenyang in order to use the toilet, but driver He Xiaofei refused to stop.

According to witnesses, when Dong grabbed the wheel, the bus suddenly veered right, smashed through a guardrail on the side of the road and then flipped over into a 10-meter-deep ditch.

"I told him I couldn't stop the bus because we were on the highway and that we'd arrive at Xianghe station in seven or eight minutes. The man walked away, but then he rushed up and tried to force me to steer right," He Xiaofei told *Beijing Star Daily* on

Tuesday from his bed in Luhe Hospital, where he is being treated for several broken bones, serious damage to his eyes and injury to one of his ears.

He said that on the fated day, the bus toilet was broken and had been locked shut.

Dong suffered a fractured pelvis in the incident and is also receiving treatment at Luhe Hospital under police guard.

"I really regret my imprudent action. I wish I could give my life in the place of the three victims," Dong told *Beijing Star Daily*. He explained that at the time his need was so urgent that he lost control of himself.

Dong is the manager of a car wash business in Fuxin, Liaoning Province.

Zhou Xiaoli, who was sitting a few meters from the driver and sustained only light injuries in the accident, recalled, "It all happened so suddenly, nobody had time to stop him."

According to Liu Weihua, a lawyer with the Minglin Law Firm, Dong should be held criminally responsible for the accident.

Liu also called for the issuing of clear regulations requiring all long-distance busses to be equipped with functioning toilets. "As far as I know, the toilets in most long-distance buses cannot keep up with passengers' needs. They either break or have no functioning water supply," he said.



Photo by Wang Haixin

Kids Take Up Opera Torch

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Some of the students at Xiyi Primary School in Haidian District may emerge as the next generation of Peking opera stars, as they started optional after-school classes in the traditional art last Tuesday.

Wang Yuance, leader of the Beijing China Radio International Youth Peking Opera Troupe and the organizer of the optional course, said the Peking opera lessons have proven surprisingly popular. "All our teachers are experts invited from the Beijing Opera Theater of Beijing, so the kids will receive truly professional Peking opera instruction," he told *Beijing Today*.

The new course is also seen as one step towards the realization of the Haidian Education Commission's recent calls for the diversification of cultural and art education at local schools.

"Peking opera is considered a national treasure and we are striving to open similar classes in other primary schools in the district. It's great that a few schools have already done so," noted Wang Xuance, director of the commission's physical and art education office.



The bus flipped over into a 10-meter-deep ditch.

Cao Boyuan



Children practicing "Crazy English"

Photo by Photocom

Should We Stop Learning English?

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The debate about English education in China was raised again recently by Xie Kechang, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). Xie pointed out the disadvantages and problems with Chinese students having to learn the language.

Though English study is compulsory from primary school on, how many of us must use English in our daily life? Xie feels a lot of human resources, intelligence and money have been wasted in the national requirement to learn English. "English has had a lot of negative influence in the selection of talented people," Xie was quoted as saying in The Beijing News last Monday.

"English education is only one part of the national education. English is just a language tool, not a must for everyone. People should have the right to decide on their own whether to learn it or not and how much they want to learn based on their abilities and needs."

Xie asked three questions: first, should everyone learn English? Currently, students have to pass a series of English examinations throughout their studies, including the National Entrance Examination, and College English Test (CET) 4 and 6.

Second, is English more important than a major? A student surnamed Wang in Guangzhou has a good record in his major courses but a poor mark in English. No matter how well he does in his major, he won't be able to study for a masters degree unless he can pass the English test. He can't even gain a degree certificate unless he at least passes CET band 4. Wang says many students have to put aside their research and learn English, even if they don't need to use it. English seems to determine the qualifications of a professional.

The last question is whether

teaching English costs too much. Due to the importance of English, many people have spent a lot on special training courses and buying expensive books.

It seems that English is increasingly seen as a burden for most Chinese. How useful and important is it?

Gu Haibing, professor, School of Management of the National Economy, Renmin University

China has a misunderstanding about English as a standard for judging professionals. Most Chinese think you must be good in every field if you are good at English, and if not, you are good for nothing. Some students who have learned English for years are sometimes no better than the self-employed businessmen standing at the foot of the Great Wall selling T-shirts to foreigners. What makes English education at schools a failure is the way that English is taught. Just let those who really need English study English.

Meng Yong, 35, a secondary programming engineer at a big state-owned enterprise

Yes, English to me is very important, not because I'll have to use it in my work, but I'll have to pass the National Test of English for Professional Qualifications in order to get the title of senior engineer. Although we do use English in our work, the English we use is totally different from what we'll be examined on. Taking such English tests is torture for me because I've been working for over ten years and to pick up my English from such a long time ago is really tiring. I had a terrible month before my English test to become a secondary engineer. I had to recite thousands of English words every evening after my tiring work, just when I needed a good rest. I really don't think it makes sense to take such an examination. Is it the case that I'm not a good engineer if I can't speak English fluently or read one piece of English news? It's really a

waste of energy and time. If we have to have an English test, it should be based on professional needs.

Ferry van der Pavert, a doctor from Holland

Anyone who wants to travel around the world needs at least a second language. Any Chinese person living outside China would be happy if he or she speaks a second language. As China is a major world power and so rich in culture, it needs people who can speak a second language such as English. Due to communications, such as television and computers, together with the development of tourism, the world has become a global village. In seconds you can know what is going on on the other side of the world.

Also, for domestic purposes, it is important for people in China to speak English. As China has become part of the world trade organization, more Chinese goods will travel around the world and many goods from other countries will flood into the Chinese markets.

In Holland, most people speak at least two languages. From the age of 10 children learn some English at school. Before that children hear a lot of English around them. On the radio, on television and if you want to work on the computer you must understand some English. We also learn two more languages at school: German and French. Much trade passes through Holland into Europe. The reason Rotterdam is the biggest port in the world is because people who live there speak other languages.

Pang Jianghui, 29, architect

Of course we should learn English. Everyone should know at least a little bit of English but we shouldn't force people to learn it. Some people are born with a gift for languages, some are not. So to judge a person on their English ability is ridiculous. The National Test of English for Professional Qualifications has unfortunately brought something real-

ly bad. I know people are spending quite a lot on a fake certificate or asking others to take the examination for them.

Yuan Jiewei, a netizen

I've taken the English entrance examination for a masters degree eight times and failed all of them. I really have no idea how to learn English well, even though I got quite a good mark in my major. Everyone knows the entrance examination for a masters degree is actually an English test. Now learning English seems to be a fashion, and the influence it has brought is no less than a political activity. Do we have to be that enthusiastic about learning foreign languages? Why don't we spend our spare time learning other skills?

Wang Sen, 18, student

I think it's necessary for everyone to learn English. But I'm not content with the English education I've received. My teachers never let me learn what I'm interested in. I hate reciting articles from a book. I think students are more likely to say no when you force something onto them. As to how much should we learn, it should depend on what we are studying at university. If my major has nothing to do with English, I would prefer to devote my time to the major. Anyway, there are a lot of jobs that don't require English.

Hu Haiwen, 29, a network engineer

I split with my girlfriend years ago because she emigrated to Australia and I couldn't go due to my poor English. How I wish that my English had been good enough at that time, then I would have been able to study in Australia with my girlfriend and perhaps, it would be a different story for me right now. You'll never know what the English you could have learned could have done for you. Perhaps, English will get you a better chance in your career; perhaps it will just help you enjoy a piece of music.

Encouraging Pre-marital Sex?

By Xiao Rong

If boys and girls are too shy to share with parents or elders their problems or confusion about sex, they might be able to get the kind of help they need from a new consulting center in Shenyang, Liaoning Province.

The first of its kind in northeast China, the center is sponsored by Shenyang Family Planning Committee. "We just want to help youngsters get adequate sex knowledge or take precautions in their sexual behavior," Huang Juxiang, a doctor at the center told Beijing Today. "Young people can either seek help from our hotline or get outpatient services for knowledge about reproductive health."

The center can also help young girls conduct abortions and if they have suffered rape, the center can even help restore the victim's hymen. Charges for this kind of service are lower than in hospitals, according to Huang.

However, since its opening at the end of February, the center has not been as popular as it expected. Controversy has arisen over whether local governments should help female youngsters have abortions. There are also questions as to the efficacy of the center in providing sex education. Opinions follow:

Mr. Geng, a middle school teacher in Shenyang

I think the help this center offers might encourage pre-marital sexual behavior. Even though young girls are not adults, they still need to learn to take responsibility for their behavior. By offering to relieve the possible pressures and dangers of sex, the help that the center intends to offer can only result in more freedom of sexual behavior among young people.

Moreover, most young girls prefer private medical institutions to conduct abortions for the sake of privacy. So even if the center charges less than that of other medical institutions, I don't think pregnant females will visit the center because it's still an official organization.

Huang Juxiang, doctor at the Shenyang Sex Consulting Center

Since the opening of our center in late February, there have not been many young visitors. The questions asked by most youngsters are focused on two areas, one being various reproductive health problems facing them, like masturbation, seminal emissions, menstruation and pregnancy. The other is psychological problems during puberty.

In my opinion, I think the founding of the center is necessary for teaching young people, especially young girls, how to protect themselves considering the increase of pre-marital sexual behavior and early pregnancy. We will mainly target young people to equip them with basic contraception methods and reproduction knowledge.

Tian Yanchun, a free-lancer from Hubei

It's humanitarian behavior for the local government to offer sex education to youngsters and help them conduct abortions when they have unexpected pregnancies. But the service of restoring the hymen is really ridiculous, as it reflects an outworn concept of virginity.

There is no direct connection between the innocence of a female and whether her hymen is still in place. Strenuous exercise can cause the breaking of the hymen. And more and more people nowadays don't care or have more understanding about the pre-marital sexual behavior of their partners. So the fact that Shenyang Family Planning Committee offers this service will only confirm outdated ideas about virginity.

Ms. Wang, mother of a high school student from Shenyang

I'm only afraid that our children will be more eager to experience pre-marital sexual behavior if the center can offer this kind of service like teaching them about contraception, helping conduct abortions and even handing out free condoms.

Zhang Sining, researcher at the Academy of Social Sciences of Liaoning Province

People should not make a fuss as to the emergence of young lovers. With the improvement of people's living standards, an increasing number of young people are physically or sexually well developed, while sex education for juveniles still lags behind. So we cannot totally blame youngsters even if they have made mistakes. Most parents or teachers just avoid talking about the sex education problems of young people, but actually the enlightenment of sexual knowledge is much more important than teaching our children skills of daily life.

Liu Li, vice director of the Shenyang Sex Consulting Center

Since the pregnancy of young girls has become a new social problem, we should face up to it. Instead of seeking help from parents or teachers, some young girls who become pregnant have to visit illegal medical institutions to conduct abortions which can sometimes lead to sterility. So we would rather educate and help these youngsters to learn self-protection and regain confidence than allow the existence of single mothers. It's much more useful to help young girls prevent pregnancy by offering adequate and accurate sex education than to only help them compensate for their mistakes.

Sun Geng, a magazine editor in Shenyang

Those young girls who have suffered from unexpected pregnancy are like lambs losing their way who badly need humane care from the government. And the role of the government should be like a guard keeping watch at night. Without the guard, young girls will be totally in despair.

Though the government can take precautions, there will always be certain number of drug addicts, pimps and prostitutes, as well as unexpected pregnancies in a society. Therefore, the government should try to minimize these problems and take precautions.

SOUND BITES

"I think the events in Spain need to be looked at very critically. One (factor in the election) was the question of who did it, and whether the public felt they got a full, clear picture from the government of what was going on. There was a question of the large number of the population having been opposed to the war being reminded of the war by the attack. But I think what is important, and what this underscores, is that we need international cooperation - working across borders - to defeat and contain terrorism."

— UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Tuesday that Spain's initial insistence that Basque terrorists were

behind last week's Madrid train bombings was a factor in Sunday's upset election victory by the Socialists.

"It's pretty much a disaster to catch a dolphin or a porpoise; you lose other catches and you damage gear. Many fishermen have respect and affection for dolphins. There's an old legend that dolphins are the souls of drowned fishermen."

— Hamish Morrison, chief executive of the Scottish Fisherman's Federation. European Union nations are close to agreeing on measures designed to save the lives of thousands of dolphins and porpoises caught accidentally in fishing nets Tuesday. The

proposals would require fishermen to install acoustic "pingers" on their boats to scare away the marine mammals.

"She died as she lived, living at the edge of experience in a sport that gave her immense pleasure. Her parachutes malfunctioned and she fought to control her fall all the way to the final, instant oblivion."

— A statement issued through Britain's Foreign Office after Clare Barnes, the 24-year-old daughter of Britain's Minister for Europe Denis MacShane died while making her 200th jump with her boyfriend in Melbourne. Her parachute malfunctioned and she plunged to her death on Sunday.

"Mainly, I was very excited. When you emerge into the snow and you're running away from the camp, there's a sense of exhilaration. We were on our way, we hoped, to freedom. That wasn't quite the case."

— Squadron Leader Bertram "Jimmy" James, 89, who gathered with other veterans Tuesday at London's Imperial War Museum to mark the 60th anniversary of the escape of 76 allied airmen who broke out of a German prisoner of war camp in March 1944. James said the minutes waiting his turn to crawl through a narrow tunnel to freedom were full of "tremendous tension mixed with fear."

(By Chen Si)

By Dong Nan

Sure, you've got a shiny new phone or computer but do you know how to use it? According to China Consumers' Association, people are having increasing problems with their technological products. The association has just released a report on consumer complaints last year. The number of complaints about daily necessities fell, compared to the year before, but those relating to hi-tech products rose sharply.

The report was based on 695,142 complaints that the association and its branches around the nation received in 2003. Among them, the association and its branches solved 670,344 cases, and retrieved more than one billion yuan for consumers.

Confusing machines

According to the survey, complaints about mobile phones and related services increased by 60% last year from 2002, and complaints about computers increased by 43%. The main problem is that consumers appeared to be confused about certain aspects of their new devices.

Cao, a citizen of Xinxiang, Henan, downloaded browser software on his computer last year. The instructions were in English so he didn't entirely understand them, but the dial-up service seemed to work okay. However, a month later, he was surprised to discover that his telephone bill was 8,000 yuan, apparently due to long distance calls. Cao hadn't made such calls so he contacted his local consumers' association.

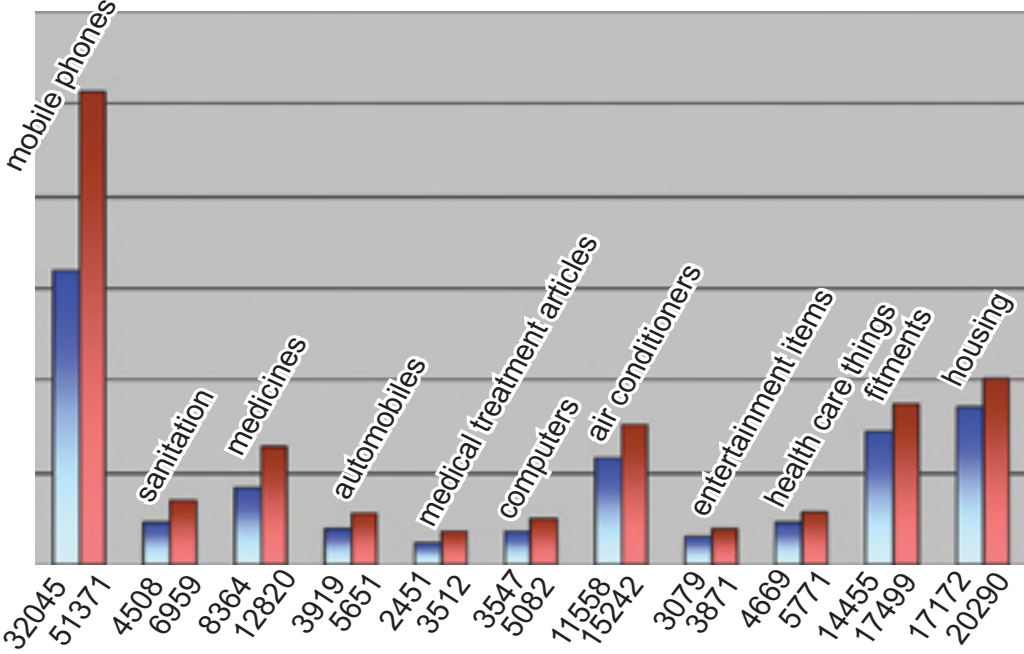
It turned out that when surfing the Internet, Cao's software made his phone dial a number in the UK. Soon it emerged that Cao was not alone. Consumers in Changchun, Nanjing, Zhenjiang, Tianjin, Qingdao and Shanghai had similar complaints.

"When using a computer, consumers are often asked to download and install updates or packages of software, but many of these are in English or need special computer skills, so this greatly confused consumers," said the report.

Sending text messages with cell phones became more and more fashionable last year, but here too, consumers were caught out. Millions of people used text messages to participate in commercial activities, such as guessing games with awards, subscribing services and paying online charges via text messages.

But few commercial hosts told participants exactly how much they would have to pay or how to cancel the service. Some of them were even trickier, send-

Tech Trouble on the Rise



complaints	increased by
mobile phones	60.30%
sanitation	54.40%
medicines	53.30%
automobiles	44.20%
medical treatment articles	43.30%
computers	43.30%
air conditioners	31.90%
entertainment items	25.70%
health care things	23.60%
fitness	21.10%
housing	18.60%

Top 11 areas attracting complains in 2003

(Sanitation and medicine complaints related mainly to SARS)

ment for which was charged to her email account.

Yang just thought they were ordinary messages so she ignored them. She only found out three months later. Fortunately the bill only came to 36 yuan, but it might have been far more had she not noticed the problem.

"These short message services seem convenient, but in fact they are really confusing. You never know how to cancel them completely," she complained.

What's the standard?

In June 2003, some 140 families in Maple Garden, a community in north east Beijing, complained that there were two broadcast towers next to the community, and the radiation from the towers was causing health problems, such as dizziness and even amnesia.

The families claimed the radiation in their rooms was well above the 10 volts per meter stipulated as a safe standard by the Ministry of Public Health. In some cases it was as high as 30 volts per meter.

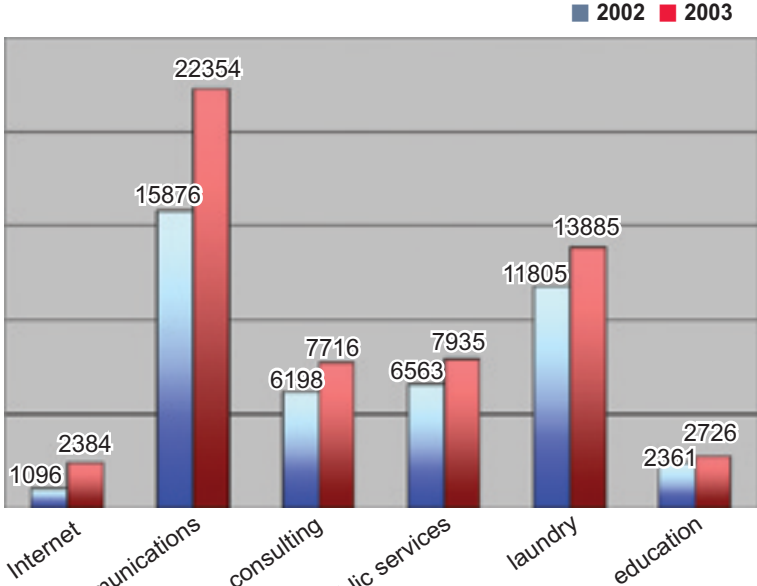
But the developer of the community argued that ac-

cording to another regulation released by the State Environmental Protection Administration, the safe standard was 40 volts per meter. The dispute still has not been solved.

An even more aggravating problem is cases in which there are no legally defined standards at all. The wife of Li, a man from Beijing, died of Aplastic Anemia in March 2003. He blamed her new car, which she had had for less than one year, based on the Standard of Air Quality Indoors, which was released by the State Environmental Protection Administration. According to this standard, the content of benzene in the car air was far too high, and benzene pollution is known to be one of the major causes of Aplastic Anemia.

But Changan Suzuki, the automobile producer, argued that "indoor" was not equal to "in-car", so the Standard of Air Quality Indoors could not be applied.

The case pointed up the lack of any standard for air quality in cars. According to a survey of 2,000 new cars, conducted by Guangzhou Zhongke Environment Inspec-



Top 6 services attracting complains in 2003

complaints	increased by
Internet	117.50%
tele communication	40.80%
consulting	24.50%
public services	20.90%
laundry	17.60%
education	15.50%

Total Complaints in 2003

cases accepted	695,142
cases resolved	670,344
loss retrieved	1.16 billion yuan
supporting lawsuits	8595
consulting received	10.17 million times

tion Center, about 90% of the cars had poor air quality.

So-called authentication

Liu Zheng found his new Chinabird mobile phone started switching off by itself one week after he bought it. He sent it to the Chinabird authentication center. But the center said his mobile phone had been damaged so it was not the problem of the producer. Liu was confused, since he thought the phone had not been damaged.

"If mobile phones had problems, consumers were often asked to send them to an authentication center to judge who should be responsible for the problem. But these authentication centers were often not independent and impartial agencies run by the government; they were run by the mobile phone companies themselves. Therefore, the fairness of their judgements could not be guaranteed, and consumers were not satisfied," said the report.

By the end of 2003, only six cities in China had independent authentication agencies for mobile phones.

The same problem occurred

with cars. Along with the boom in buying private cars in China, complaints are also increasing. In 2003, complaints about automobiles and related services increased by 44% from 2002.

Since an automobile is probably the most complicated everyday machine in most people's lives, with thousands of fittings and accessories, if there is a problem, it is often hard to decide whether the producer or the consumer is at fault. Therefore authentication agencies are urgently needed.

Though China had some 1,000 such agencies by the end of 2003, this is still far from enough, especially since only a dozen of them had the authority to issue judgements on new automobiles. Besides, the charges for authentications are extremely high — thousands of yuan generally, and more than ten thousand sometimes. Most people can hardly afford that kind of money. So increasing numbers of consumers are finding they can not get a satisfying result to problems with their cars.

(Source: China Consumers' Association)

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By Sun Ming

His girlfriend was brutally killed eight years ago and he was arrested as the main suspect. Sun Wangang, 29, was sentenced to death but he has just been acquitted in Yunnan Province.

"They detained me for eight years without sufficient evidence. How many years are there in a person's life? I would have stayed in prison forever if I hadn't kept appealing," Sun told *Beijing Today* last week.

Sun is now appealing for state compensation.

A terrible night

Sun said that he would never forget the night that changed his life eight years ago. It was the evening of January 3, 1996.

At that time, both Sun and his girlfriend Chen Xinghui were students at Yunnan Provincial Finance and Trade Institute. Sun was a freshman and Chen was a sophomore. The couple were spending their winter vacation in Xinhua village, their hometown in the province.

That evening, the couple had dinner with the family of Sun's sister. When they left, it was around nine o'clock.

"We took a walk to the foot of Hongwei Hill. We sat on the grass. I felt a bit drunk because I had drunk some alcohol with my sister's family. Suddenly, I was hit by someone on the head and I passed out. When I woke up, my girlfriend had disappeared," Sun told *Beijing Today*.

Sun says he got up to look for

Death Sentence Suspect Acquitted

College student awaiting execution released after eight years



Sun (right) presents a token of gratitude to Yunnan Provincial High Court

Chen and he soon heard her voice. Following the voice, he found Chen was talking with a man. The man claimed that he was a security guard and he suspected Chen was a prostitute. But he promised to release Chen soon.

"He urged me to go to a nearby hospital to wrap my bleeding head. I really shouldn't have left," Sun admits. "I was drunk and dizzy at that time. Also, to be frank, I was scared because the man had a knife."

Sun left, but he didn't report

the case to police. He just asked several friends to help search for his girlfriend later that night and the next morning. "I didn't report the case because I was afraid that she had been raped. I didn't want more people to know this."

However, Sun was arrested by police at home the next day. They told him she had been found dead and dismembered, and he was the chief suspect. Chen's body had been found just a few hundred meters from where Sun was hit that night.

Sentenced to death

Sun was taken to Qiaojia County Detention Center. He firmly denied the charges.

"But later I had to confess that I killed her, because I couldn't tolerate the torture," he said. "They beat me with iron sticks. They didn't allow me to sleep for several weeks." Sun clearly remembers the names of the three policemen who tortured him: Luo Qiming, Chen Bin and Wang Honglin. Sun said in court his confession had been extracted through torture.

On September 16, 1996, Zhaotong Intermediate People's Court sentenced Sun to death. If he hadn't appealed, he would have been executed. The indictment read that Sun killed Chen because she owed him 350 yuan. It also said that Sun had raped Chen before killing her.

"Just for 350 yuan? It's ridiculous!" said Sun angrily. "They couldn't find any convincing evidence against me! I had no motive at all."

The police weren't able to find a murder weapon, usually a vital piece of evidence in a murder case. The main evidence against Sun was Chen's bloodstains left on Sun's clothes.

"The killer might have also hit my girlfriend when I passed out," said Sun. "So her blood would have been spattered on my clothes."

Sun appealed to Yunnan Provincial High Court after hearing the verdict. Yunnan Provincial High Court thought that in the original judgment, the facts were not clearly ascertained and the evidence was insufficient, so the court asked Zhaotong Intermediate People's Court to retry the case.

However, Zhaotong Intermediate People's Court stuck to its original judgment. In May 1998, Sun was again sentenced to death.

For the second time, Sun appealed to Yunnan Provincial High Court. In November 1998, the High Court made a final judgment. Sun was sentenced to death, but with a two-year reprieve.

Kept appealing

"My girlfriend was murdered, but I was viewed as the killer! I felt extremely depressed and full of pain, but I gradually made up my mind to prove myself not guilty," said Sun.

Detained at the Yunnan Provincial Fourth Prison, Sun spent most of his time writing letters to the procuratorate departments

and public security departments in Kunming and Beijing.

"I can't remember how many letters I've written in the past eight years, but there was never any answer," said Sun.

In late 2002, Sun read an article in a newspaper which inspired him a lot. A prisoner who had also been sentenced to death was acquitted with the help of a lawyer called Liu Hule. Sun then called Liu to ask for help.

"I received Sun's call. We thought that the verdict in his case was improper. There was not enough evidence against him," Zhang Qian, Liu's assistant, told *Beijing Today* last Friday. "In January 2003, we accepted Sun's case."

Zhang said that the verdict in Sun's case was partly based on China's legal system. Before China's new Criminal Law was issued in 1997, verdicts were based on presumption of guilt. In this circumstance, the burden of proof was upon Sun to present enough evidence to show he was not guilty. Sun couldn't produce this evidence.

The new Criminal Law issued in 1997 was based on presumption of innocence, so now the court was supposed to find enough evidence against Sun.

"It was partly the process of accepting a new law," said Wang when asked why Zhaotong Intermediate People's Court still insisted on its original judgment in 1998.

In September 2003, Yunnan Provincial People's Procuratorate began to investigate Sun's case. The procuratorate decided the evidence against Sun was insufficient. On January 15, Yunnan Provincial High Court ruled Sun not guilty due to lack of evidence.

Can doubts be removed?

"He was acquitted, but this doesn't mean that he's innocent," Yang Yunheng, a spokesman for Yunnan Provincial High Court, told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday. "He was released only because there wasn't sufficient evidence against him. There is still a possibility that Sun was the killer."

Yang told *Beijing Today* that Yunnan Provincial People's Procuratorate hasn't begun to investigate whether police at Qiaojia Police Station extorted Sun's confessions through torture.

Sun told *Beijing Today* that in June 2002, Qiaojia Police Station arrested Li Maofu who apparently confessed that he killed Chen Xinghui. However, Li later withdrew his confession. "I heard that the policemen asked him to withdraw his confession. The policemen who interrogated Li were the same ones who interrogated me," said Sun.

Li was executed on February 17 this year for the murder of two other people. "So we'll never have the opportunity to prove that it was Li who killed my girlfriend," said Sun.

However, Yang thought this would have been unlikely in any case. "Following their investigation, the police dismissed any likelihood that Li had killed Chen. Li actually killed someone in the same place where Chen was killed, but it was a different person, not Chen," said Yang.

Compensation

Sun has appealed for state compensation. Sun said that his family had engaged in his lawsuits in the past eight years and now had debts of 50,000 yuan.

"I just hope to get compensation to repay the debt," said Sun. "The time I lost can never be repaid."

However, Sun can only get 100,000 yuan at most. According to China's "Law on Compensation by the State", applicants can only recover economic losses on the basis of wages they would have earned.

"Anyway, the most important thing for me is to study. Even though my major was computers, I have no idea about email, the Internet or any other new things about computers. Eight years is really a long time in a person's life," said Sun.

Downtown Beggars Can Be Choosers

You are with friends in a downtown area, whiling away a pleasant few hours when someone suddenly approaches you and says: "Help me, please give me some money!"

You happen to have no small change or just not in the mood to oblige, so try to step around the beggar.

However, your way is blocked.

"They simply jump on you, holding your legs and clutching your clothes," says Tang Ruiming, a 58-year-old retired doctor in Chengdu, capital of southwest China's Sichuan Province, recalling her recent experience on the street.

A young man, Tang says, was forced to hand out a 1 yuan (12 US cents) note to a woman who knelt before him and grasped his waist with her arms, begging loudly.

Tang, who used to willingly dole out some small amounts of money to beggars, decided that she might well withhold her sympathy after this.

"They seem to have no shame," Tang says. "I do not know if they will jump on me in the same way."

Complaints

It is by no means an isolated incident - across the country, complaints against unbridled coercive begging in cities have increased significantly.

A survey conducted recently in Ningbo, a coastal city in east China's Zhejiang Province, indicates that beggars are testing the limits of kind-hearted people's forbearance.

Ningbo's Haishu District issued questionnaires to residents, asking whether the government should resort to more aggressive measures to restrict increasing intimidatory begging in the area.

About 95 percent of the respondents said the beggars have seriously disturbed social order and should be effectively dealt with.

In view of the negative impact on their businesses, some owners have voluntarily started to clear away beggars - Ningbo City Square Development and Operation Company has reportedly employed 150 security guards to mount a round-the-clock watch on beggars in the area.

Ying Jianrong, director of the district's Beggar Management Office, believes that "99.9 percent" of the beggars in downtown Ningbo are not "real beggars."

Real beggars are those living on the alms doled out but the "beggars" in downtown Ningbo

are more like professionals, working fixed hours in organized groups and earning "salaries" based on their contribution to the group.

"It is these fake beggars who have taken advantage of people's kindness," Ying says.

Ying believes such organized groups can be found everywhere in the country. "These people are not worth helping," he says.

Governments in Chengdu and Changsha, capital of central China's Hunan Province, have urged residents to follow the example of Shanghai and not give money directly to beggars on the street.

A source with the civil affairs authority of Chengdu says the move is aimed to effectively stave off coercive begging. "You rarely see beggars in Shanghai, because Shanghai people rarely give money to beggars."

Kaili beggars

Kaili, a small city in eastern Guizhou Province, southwest China, has recently found itself in the unpleasant spotlight as the "home of beggars."

Since the Spring Festival in some major Chinese cities, they have become a hot media topic - many of the beggars claimed they were from the remote Kaili area, mainly inhabited by the Miao ethnic minority group.

But this is not true, says Meng Renquan, director of the Kaili Civil Affairs Bureau.

Earlier last month, Meng got a call from the aid center in Foshan, south China's Guangdong Province, saying they had taken in 30-odd Kaili beggars. Officials of the bureau met with these people in Foshan soon after. They found these people did not come from Kaili because they didn't speak with the local Kaili accent, says Meng.

Meng says Kaili takes good care of its low-income people and there should not be such a large number of Kaili beggars.

According to Meng, of the area's population of 450,000, about 30,000 are classified as "poverty-stricken." Every year, the local government allocates a special fund of 3 million yuan (US\$360,000), namely 100 yuan per "poverty-stricken" villager, along with several hundred tons of rice, to ensure the basic living needs of the people.

Therefore, Kaili forbids village authorities to issue "poverty certificates" says Meng, talking about the "poverty certificates" produced by the "Kaili beggars."

"Whenever I encounter a beggar on my business trips to other



cities who claims to come from Kaili, I always stop and inquire about their condition. But believe it or not, I have never found a real Kaili person."

Meng believes it is only because Kaili is relatively unfamiliar to many Chinese that its name has been misused. "This is an unfair smudge on our reputation," he says.

The way out

Observers believe the recent increase of beggars in many Chinese cities has to do with the country's repeal of the 21-year-old Measures for Internment and Deportation of Urban Vagrants and Beggars last year.

Under the rule, people without a residency permit were deported or detained; now, they are advised to seek help from aid centers.

But while the change has earned much acclaim as a protection of human rights, city administrators find themselves confronted with a knotty issue: they are left with no effective means to handle the increasing number of beggars in public areas.

The beggar restriction office in Ningbo has begun designating beggar-free zones; and since February 20 they have not been allowed in major commercial areas.

Meanwhile, Zhang Guifang, an official in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province, says Guangzhou will establish zones

barring beggars.

Beijing, Shanghai, and Suzhou of east China's Jiangsu Province have already embarked on a similar course.

Lin Maoguang, a member of the Guangdong Provincial People's Political Consultative Conference, says it is time for the local government to seriously tackle the "beggar issue" and submitted a proposal urging "better management of beggars" at the annual session of the conference last month.

Lin says he was urged to submit the proposal because so many beggars showed up in downtown Guangzhou during the Spring Festival that they had become a nuisance.

"The existence of so many beggars has tarnished the image of the city, and their coercive begging has made them disgusting," he says.

Legal challenges

However, there are doubts over the legitimacy of zones for bidding beggars.

Shen Kui, a law professor at Peking University, says in an article published recently that the government has no legal footing to restrict beggars unless it can prove that begging breaks the law.

Shen believes the only proper way to solve the problem is to reduce poverty through economic development, while better

aiding poverty-stricken people through a more comprehensive social welfare system because the number of vagrants and beggars is likely to grow in the process of urbanization.

Moreover, he urges more financial support for aid centers because, currently, most cannot fully help those in need.

Zou Kaihong, a public prosecutor with the Dongcheng District Procuratorate of Beijing, agrees, but acknowledges the difficulties in discerning the real intentions of the beggars. Professional begging has emerged as a question that needs to be seriously tackled, he says.

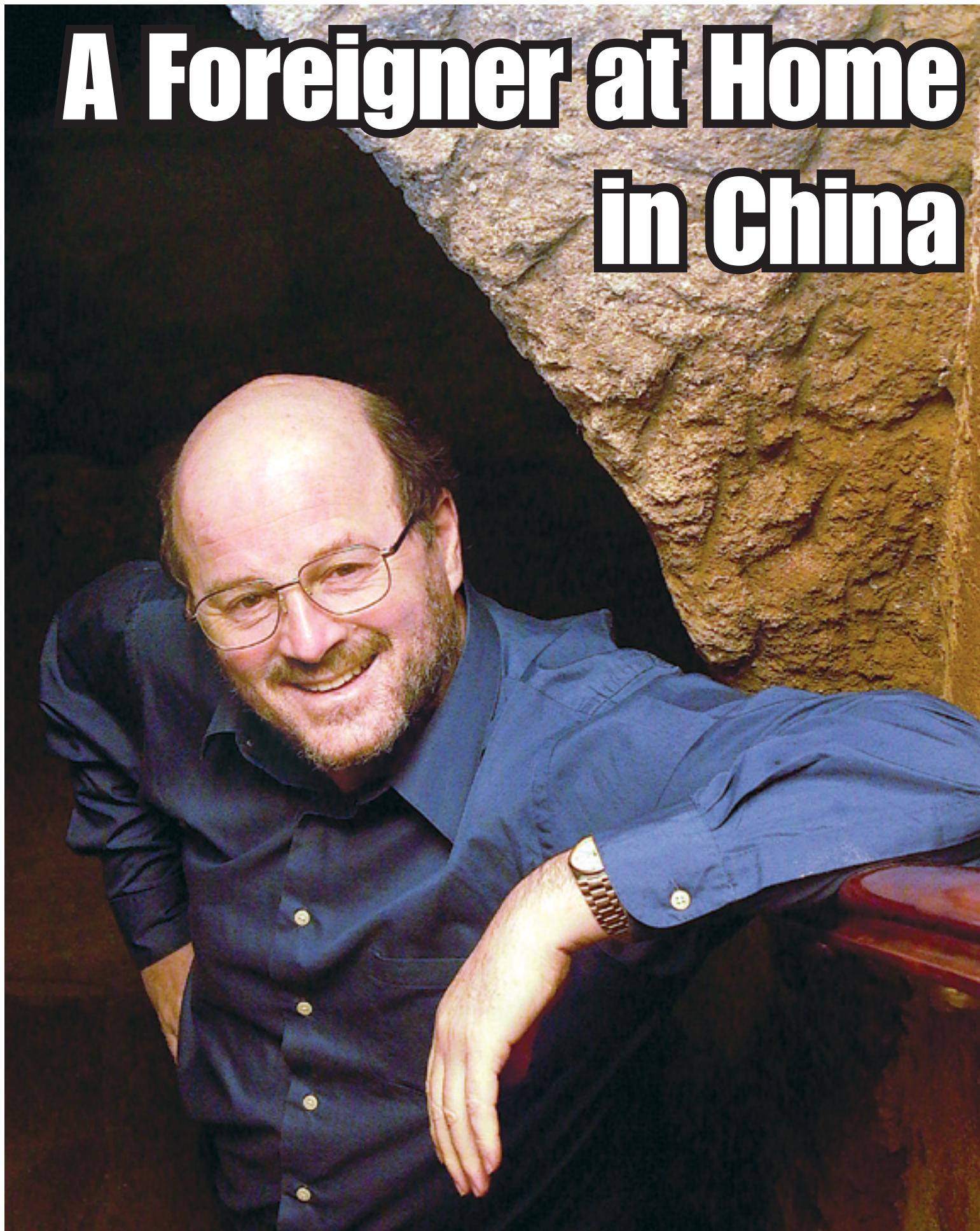
Therefore, Zou says he prefers the prescription of Changsha to this problem, which is stepping up efforts to build aid centers and at the same time, urging local people not to directly give money to beggars.

"A real beggar will be content with the food and shelter at an aid centre, while the professionals will never quit their profitable business," says Ying of the beggar restriction office in Ningbo.

Statistics indicate that the aid centre in Ningbo handled at least 100 beggars a day before internment was stopped but merely dealt with 300 in the last five months.

(Source: *China Daily*)

A Foreigner at Home in China



Crook at the entrance to his cellar

Photos by Tian Xiaotong

For Crook and his younger brothers, life during the Cultural Revolution was easy, as there was no one to supervise them.



Crook likes to drink wine with friends in the courtyard of his house.

By Shan Jinliang

There's nothing new about foreigners settling down and living in China, but Carl Crook's connections to this country run unusually deep. You might even feel envious, as he's probably one of the few non-natives who can genuinely claim to be fluent in Chinese. But though he enjoyed growing up in China, there were also tough times.

For Crook, the Cultural Revolution was a time of ease and coming of age, partly because he was free of supervision from his parents who had been accused of spying and locked up. Since then Crook has been involved in various business ventures, some more successful than others, and now he's helping get the local wine industry off the ground.

Revolution baby

While most foreigners complain of the difficulty of learning Chinese, Crook found himself with a different problem as a child: that of learning English. At home his parents insisted on speaking Chinese. They had moved to Hebei in 1947, and Carl was born two years later in 1949.

Crook's father, David, joined the British Communist Party in 1936 and soon he was sent to Shanghai as a member of the Third International. First he worked as a teacher for St. John's University in Shanghai. He joined the British army during World War II, but after the war, he and his wife went to live in the village of Shildian or Ten Mile Inn in Hebei Province in 1947. They worked on a report on China's land reform and also taught English.

The couple moved to Beijing to teach at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) in 1949. Carl

has only dim memories of his early years, one of which was his mother putting a sign saying "Don't Feed" on his back to stop people giving him ice creams. The ploy didn't work. He also remembers watching movies in a big hall with crowds of people.

Crook says his parents didn't speak Chinese well, partly because they dedicated their years in China to teaching English. However, they made an effort to speak Chinese at home.

Easy days in the Cultural Revolution

In the next two decades, just like other Chinese people, the Crook family experienced the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.

Carl went to primary school at the BFSU in 1957, shortly before the Great Leap Forward began. He remembers the school being divided into different teams to make steel in the "backyard furnaces". It seemed pretty futile, Crook told *Beijing Today*. "The steel we produced did not appear to be useful for any practical purpose," he said.

Crook's parents were arrested in 1968 on a charge of spying. Crook knew they were innocent, but they were still detained for five years. However, for Crook and his younger brothers, life was now easy as there was no-one to control them. "They were afraid we would be spoiled at home so they sent us to boarding school at Chongwen Primary School. But during their detention their salaries were given to us so we had plenty of money." Crook and his brothers had 360 yuan to spend every month, so they spent a lot of time playing truant and dining out in Beijing's restaurants.

One year later, when Crook's Chinese classmates were sent to

the countryside to do manual work, he began to operate machines in the Haidian Agricultural Machine Repairs Plant and then the No.1 Beijing Automobile Repair Plant. This lasted for the next four years.

"The days were not hard," Crook says. He clearly remembers when he and his colleagues were summoned to clear the snow-covered road to the Badaling Section of the Great Wall the night before US President Richard Nixon was to visit. Crook admits joining the Red Guards, but he says he only attended meetings and never got involved in any violence.

Premier Zhou Enlai organized a party for the wrongly imprisoned foreigners after their discharge in 1973, including Crook's parents. "He apologized for the mistake for my parents' detention," Crook told *Beijing Today*, "and he even toasted us and said he hoped the experience would not leave them with a bitter memory of China." The devotion of Crook's parents was undimmed. Long afterwards, they said being locked up hadn't made them regret their decision to come to China.

Three months after Premier Zhou's reception, Crook headed for the West for a while, initially England and then the United States, where, as well as getting married, he majored in education at the University of Massachusetts before studying Asian Studies and History at Stanford University in California.

Bringing wine to China

While he was doing his thesis in the US in 1984, Crook learned that the Occidental Petroleum Company planned to hire a Beijing representative to develop a US\$700-million coalmine project in Shanxi. He applied and got the job. Unfortunately, the project was a failure due to a steep drop in coal prices on the international market. Crook returned to the US but he had a strong desire to come back to China and set up his own business.

With his partner David Henderson, Crook formed a new company called Montrose Food and Wine Company in 1996. Both men sensed there was a growing interest in red and white wine in China so they started importing foreign wines.

Crook says the business grew slowly, but he learned to promote it by introducing the health benefits of wine. Even though wine has since become far more popular in China, Crook believes the market still has enormous potential.

The company initially focused on distribution, Crook told *Beijing Today*, "but now we are moving into production." He is now searching for vineyards,



Crook shows the hole which he first dug to enter the cellar.

and his Chinese wine, the Xi Xia Cabernet Sauvignon, is being manufactured in Ningxia.

Underground escape

Crook now lives in a two-story siheyuan near a small canal in Haidian District with his wife and three sons. The siheyuan is not an original one, but one designed by Crook himself. Hanging on his living room wall are black and white photos of his parents in military uniforms in Hebei.

While most people in Beijing have to endure the hot summers in the city, Crook has an easy escape: his own wine cellar near his home. Inside the cool cellar, he can sip vintage wine and take refuge from the noise, as well as the heat. The cellar used to be owned by a French-Chinese surnamed Wu who moved back to France some years ago. The cellar has five rooms, and Crook jokes that it could work as an air-raid shelter since it is five meters below the ground. Now it is quite empty inside except for some old wine and some sculptures.

Crook is enthusiastic about travel as well as history. Once when he traveled to Huailai, Hebei Province to find a local vineyard, he passed through a village called Tumubao, and his memories of learning Chinese history told him that it was possibly related to the Tumubao Event in the Ming Dynasty. He asked an old man in the village who confirmed this. The Emperor Ying of the Ming Dynasty was detained by the Mongolian troops 550 years ago. People are still digging up weapons and armor.

As a wine connoisseur, Crook knows there are some things best left in the past. When several brass containers of 2,000-year-old liquid rice wine were unearthed in Shaanxi last year, he was sought out by the BBC for an interview. It was an impressive vintage, he agreed, but sadly not one that was drinkable.



Crook with a photo of his father in Hebei in 1947.

A Performer's Life on Stage

A new opera tells the story of Peking opera legend Mei Lanfang

By Zhao Pu

Already the subject of films, books and even a ballet, the story of Mei Lanfang is to be presented at last as a Peking Opera.

The new opera, simply titled *Mei Lanfang*, will be staged by Beijing's Peking Opera Troupe, and focuses on the artist's courage and patriotism during the anti-Japanese war, rather than his art.

"What we want to show to our audience is not Mei's artistic achievements, which are already well documented. We'd rather display his great personality, which is as glorious as his art, and should be studied by today's Peking Opera performers," deputy director of the troupe Lu Ao told *Beijing Today* in an interview last Friday.

Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) embellished the Peking Opera traditions of the past with his own creations, shaping a style of his own and giving birth to the Mei Lanfang School. He was also the first artist to introduce Peking Opera to overseas audiences, winning international recognition across the globe.

During the anti-Japanese war, the female impersonator grew a moustache in protest and disbanded his troupe rather than entertain the enemy.

Famous *lao sheng* (old man) actor of the National Troupe of Peking Opera Yu Kuizhi will play the role of Mei. Mei Lanfang's son, Mei Baojiu, will also appear.

Director of the opera Chen Xinyi has won many of the top Peking Opera awards in recent years. She herself is a great fan of Mei Lanfang and was fortunate enough to see him perform when she was a 16-year-old opera student. Speaking at a press conference announcing the new opera, she recalled, "When he gracefully returned and pretended to pick a flower on the stage, suddenly I felt that I could smell the flower in his hand."

Meeting the master after the performance she had the temerity to ask why he, as a man, performed female roles. "Because men know better of the female beauty than women," Mei Lanfang answered her.

The new opera, written by Sheng Heyu, will be performed using colloquial dialogue and lyrics, which will make it easier to understand than the older operas. It will debut at the Chang'an Grand Theatre this May.



Li Shengsu and Yu Kuizhi as Su Zhifang, Mei Lanfang's wife and Mei Lanfang in rehearsal
Photo by Tian Xiaotong



Mei Lanfang and Yang Xiaolou in Ba Wang Bie Ji (Farewell, My Concubine), circa 1920-30s

The Art of Mei Lanfang

Traditionally only men performed in Peking Opera, including the female roles. Mei Lanfang is known as the greatest of all the Peking Opera female impersonators.

For half a century, he was a household name in China. Right up until the time of his death, he managed to preserve the splendor of his art, playing roles with the same vitality he did as a young man.

Mei Lanfang himself admitted that he was never a student of great natural talent. He just strove his whole life to achieve artistic perfection through practice.

He began his career at the age of eight. His teacher said he showed little promise because of his lack-luster eyes. To remedy this, he exercised them relentlessly, managing to transform them into a pair of bright, keen, highly expressive eyes. Before he reached the age of 20, he had already won national fame.

Singing, dancing, and acting are the three main components of traditional Chinese opera. Mei Lanfang became highly accomplished at all of them. He turned himself into a performer of almost all types of the *dan*, or female roles and thoroughly broke the rigid distinction between *qing yi*, the dignified, graceful female, and the vivacious young *hua dan*.

After many years of effort he enabled the *dan* to occupy a very important place in Peking Opera, with a clear-cut form for newcomers to follow and develop.

In over 50 years on the stage, Mei Lanfang played no less than 100 different characters in the traditional Peking Opera repertoire. He revolutionized both stage make-up and costumes, systemized and enriched characters' gestures, expressions and poses. He also wrote many new plays, designing the choreography himself. The many dances he created form part of the great legacy that he left to Peking Opera.

In 1930, Mei Lanfang embarked on a successful US tour. There his exotic but exquisite performances fascinated both public and academic circles, opening westerners' eyes to the fact that Peking Opera was a theatrical form of great literary and artistic value.

Five years later, Mei Lanfang had another stage success in the former Soviet Union, where he won the praise of such dramatic heavyweights as Stanislavsky and Meyerhold.

Age was never a barrier for Mei Lanfang. Even in his 60s he could still summon the strength to play a female warrior. In 1959, just two years before his death from heart problems, he added one last piece to his already full repertoire, *Mu Guiying Takes Command*. But his most enduring legacy was his son and disciple Mei Baojiu, who reinterpreted his father's roles and ensured the Mei Lanfang School would thrive for another generation.

Source: CCTV



Ming Dynasty wrist pillow
Photo by Huang Liang

Traditional Medicine Museum

By Guo Yuandan

Traditional Chinese medicine is a national treasure with a long history. But in the headlong rush toward modernization of the last few decades, it has lost its relevance to many.

It was a desire to revive this relevance that inspired Ma Jie to set up his Yushengtang Traditional Chinese Medicine Museum. "At least 1,000 herbal medicine shops existed during the Ming and Qing dynasties," Ma told *Beijing Today* in an interview last Thursday.

One of the best-known of these was Yushengtang, founded by the Bai family in Yuci, Shanxi Province in 1608, and later moved to Beijing.

It became famous for the skill of its medical practitioners and reasonably priced, high quality medicines. The business reached its peak during the reign of Qing emperor Qianlong, who personally bestowed a sign inscribed with the characters *Yushengtang*, in his own handwriting.

The museum, which opened last year, houses over 10,000 relics, and is divided into seven sections, including traditional Chinese medicinal instruments, types of traditional herbal medicines and packaging, medicinal books and publications and old advertisements.

"It is surprising that so many things were able to be preserved during the Cultural Revolution. Many people asked how and where these treasures were hidden. It is a secret, if the second Cultural Revolution should come, the same ways could be used again," Ma joked.

"The herbal medicine shops of old were quite different from those of today. They not only sold medicine, but collected and produced all the ingredients," Ma said.

In the course of preparing the exhibits for display in the museum, Ma found many had originated from famous old traditional medicine shops such as Tongrentang and Huqing Yutang. Tongrentang had some 20 branches throughout China in the late 19th and early 20th century. The museum features medicine lists, books and medical equipment from many of those branches.

Ma also said that he hopes in the future to publish a book introducing the traditional Chinese medicine shops.

The Yushengtang Traditional Chinese Medicine Museum is at Sihe Zhuangyuan Huaxiang, in Fengtai District.

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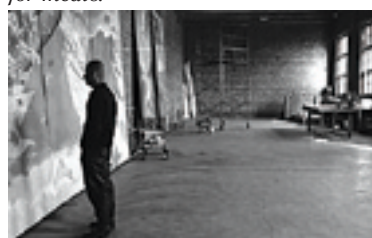
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Artist Zhang Dong moonlights as a vendor at Panjiayuan.



Zhao made many friends by treating for meals.



Fang Lijun in his studio



Yin Kun with a few of his works



Wang Qiang shows off one of his 'nude jackets.'



Liu Tong, Li Xianting and Pian Shan at Liu's studio



Painter Liu Guoqiang and his muse and wife, Xiao Lizi

By Yu Shanshan

One visit to the Songzhuang artists' colony in northeast Beijing and photographer Zhao Tielin was hooked. He returned to the bohemian colony dozens of times over the next three years, developing strong ties with its residents' and respect for their choices of lifestyle. Then, last year, he culled his wealth of photographs, interviews and personal experiences from the village into a book, *Songzhuang in Black and White* (356 pages, 39 yuan), published in October 2003. The half-photo, half-text work vividly depicts everyday life at Songzhuang and speaks volumes about Zhao's own feelings about the place.

In the photographer's words, Songzhuang is a symbol of the new choices of lifestyle open to young people in China brave enough to resist convention.

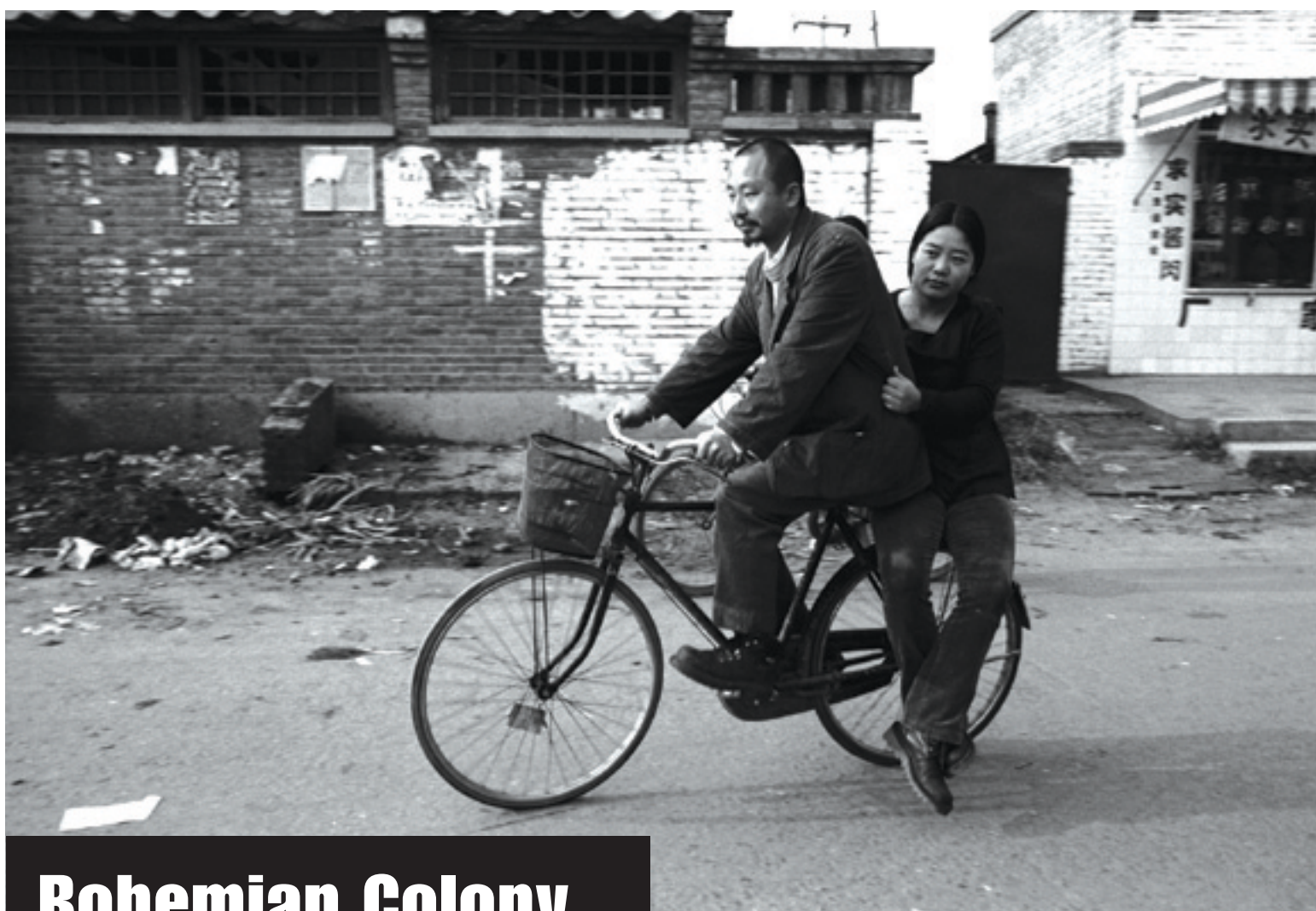
The colony at Songzhuang developed after the decline of the Yuanmingyuan artists' village near the old Summer Palace in 1995. At first, just a few famed artists from that community moved to Songzhuang, but they were quickly followed by recent art graduates and aspiring and accomplished artists from all over the city and the country. Today, the village and a few neighboring communities such as Xiaobao, Daxingzhuang and Xindian, are home to around 300 residents, all artists and their families.

Local media coverage of Songzhuang has focused on the tranquil, relatively poor lives of most of the artists and some of their strange performance art pieces. Zhao, however, sees Songzhuang as much more, a small community that has massive implications. "I have always been interested in cultural and social undercurrents that can end up affecting society as a whole," he told *Beijing Today* last Friday.

Zhao, 56, began his career as a photographer more than a dozen ago and a distinct sociological bent has been evident in his work from early on. "Chinese society is becoming more diverse and I want to know how young people are reacting to this situation. Proving their identities and place in this diverse society seems very important to them," he explained.

His study of Songzhuang began on the last day of 1999, when he was sent to the village on assignment by the Shenzhen-based magazine *Shenzhen Pictorial*. Zhao's first subjects were artist couple Shao Zhenpeng and Mu Chen and Wang Qiang, who paints nudes inside men's suit jackets.

He returned to the village many times over the next three years, befriending scores of other artists and their families and re-



Artist couple Pian Shan and Liu Tong rely on their old bike to get around.

Bohemian Colony in Black and White

Photographer Zhao Tielin focuses on artists at Songzhuang village



Lu Lin is a heavy-drinking painter from Shandong.

Recording moments of their lives. "I was welcomed there, perhaps in part because I paid for people's meals. All the unknown artists hoped to be in the book, even if I was going to criticize them," Zhao said.

His lens did not only focus on the "starving" artists. Zhao also talked extensively with the few very successful members of the

community such as famed artists Fang Lijun and Li Xianting, considered the "godfather" of the Songzhuang communities.

In the book, Zhao writes that despite being an artist of top stature in this country, Fang Lijun has been able to stay at the cutting edge of social and artistic evolution in China. A quote from Fang explains his attrac-

tion to the simple life offered at Songzhuang: "The significance of Songzhuang is not in whether there are buyers for our paintings, or whether academics and society at large know our names. It is in [Songzhuang's] tremendous power as an example, showing people that after so many years artists can finally find real freedom and can lead decent lives based on their own creativity, not based on government sponsorship."

The book contains many other similar passages from artists about their views of modern art and their personal stories, backed up by black-and-white photographs that show them in their chosen environment.

Zhao captured moments in the lives of performance artists Pian Shan and Liu Tong, from highs during performances to lows, such as when the restaurant they owned went bankrupt. He snapped the volatile love and hate relationship between artist Liu Guoqiang and his unstable girlfriend (now wife) Xiao Lizi. Sculptor Suo Tan looks tired in his portrait as he cares for his four-year-old daughter while his wife works all day to support the family.

"Unlike my generation, today's young people don't feel compelled to make 'contributions' to the improvement of the country. They can pursue their own interests and own ways of life," said

Zhao. "Yet Chinese people have long been accustomed to having one ruler, one emperor to listen to, one party to follow, one way to develop and live. It's still not an environment in which people out of mainstream can be very comfortable. The Songzhuang artists are a good example - they have all sacrificed in order to realize their desired way of life."

Zhao stopped snapping and started organizing his photos of Songzhuang in the spring of 2003. He remains friends with many of the village's artists and still visits when he can.

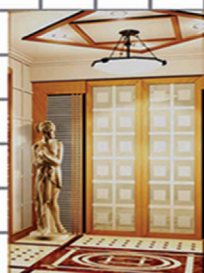
From 1990 to 1999, Zhao conducted a similarly extensive study of another marginalized social group, in that case prostitutes in Hainan. Moved by Zhao's sincerity, many of the women he met opened up and granted him access to every corner of their lives. The photographic results were published in 1999 in the now famous book *Focus on Survival - Girls Wandering at the Edge of the City*.

Zhao told *Beijing Today* that he saw one important likeness between the two groups he has studied with his camera - though most of them met failure, they never considered giving up their dreams. "Sometimes I think that their struggles are hopeless, but they are valuable. The value comes from them daring to choose their own paths, whether they lead to success or failure," he said.

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加裕华装饰

Goddess of Luna to Shine in Beijing

By Dong Nan

Every year, there are rumors of a tour, but this year, it seems the rumors are true. Sarah Brightman is to give two performances, on May 30 and 31, at Capital Stadium, as part of her 2004 world tour.

Though Brightman is renowned for her performances in musicals, Chinese fans know her from her 2000 album *La Luna*, in which she brings her ethereal, angelic vocals to a combination of classical and pop music.

Brightman will perform songs from last year's *Harem*, and some of her most popular songs, including *Memory*, from *Cats*.



Young Director to Stage Absurd Theater

By Dong Nan

The People's Arts Theater will stage Harold Pinter's *The Lover*, next month, directed by Xu Ang. At the age of 26, Xu is the youngest director in the history of the theater.

To Chinese audiences, Harold Pinter is probably best known as the screenwriter of the film *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. *The Lover* written in 1962, is about a couple who have been married for ten years and are tiring of each other. The husband takes on a different persona, enacting the role of a lover for the wife, while she plays the role of a whore for him.

"Though neither the two leading actors nor I have the experience of a 10-year marriage, I believe everyone can understand the feeling of being tired of something old and being excited by something new. The audience look into the couple's life as 'voyuers,'" Xu said at the first rehearsal, to which the media was invited, last week.

Apart from one minor supporting role with only seven lines, the play has only two characters: the husband and the wife, performed by Wang Ban and Yang Ting.

The Lover opens on April 15 at the Mini Theater of the People's Arts Theater.

WORLDWIDE



Prince

Prince Goes 'Crazy' at Rock Hall of Fame Ceremony

Prince, the late George Harrison, Traffic, ZZ Top, Bob Seger, Jackson Browne, the Dells and Rolling Stone co-founder Jann Wenner were welcomed into the ranks of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Monday during a gala ceremony at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

Decked out in a debonair white suit and black shirt, Prince kicked off the evening's proceedings by leading an ace eight-piece band through *Let's Go Crazy*, *Sign 'O' the Times* and *Kiss*, The latter track was teased with the horn-driven introduction to the Sam and Dave-popularized *Soul Man*.

(Reuters)



Whitney Houston

Singer Whitney Houston Enters Drug Rehab Program

Pop star Whitney Houston has entered a drug rehabilitation program in an undisclosed location, her publicist said on Monday.

The Grammy winning singer and actress, who is married to singer Bobby Brown, "thanks everyone for their support and prayers," publicist Nancy Seltzer said. The couple, married since 1992, has a daughter, Bobbi Kristina, who was born in 1993.

Seltzer would not disclose what facility Houston had chosen or how long she expected to be in treatment.

(Reuters)

Murciano Joins 'Congeniality 2'

Without a Trace star Enrique Murciano is ready to make his mark on the big screen, signing on to star as Sandra Bullock's love interest in *Miss Congeniality 2*.

Bullock's character, FBI Special Agent Gracie Hart, heads to Las Vegas on a new case with a fellow agent, played by Regina King. Murciano will play a liaison with the Las Vegas bureau of the FBI who falls for Hart after recently being dumped by his own girlfriend. Heather Burns and William Shatner also star.

Director John Pasquin (*The Santa Clause*) starts shooting the Warner Bros project next month in Los Angeles, followed by New York and Las Vegas. Bullock will again produce from a script by Marc Lawrence, who also penned the original Donald Petrie-directed film. Budgeted in the \$45 million range, the first installment cleared \$100 million at the domestic box office.

Murciano's big-screen credits include *Traffic* and *Black Hawk Down*.



Bono

Bono Heads Back to Campus

U2 frontman Bono will deliver the commencement address May 17 at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

The artist will also receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree at the ceremony. Bono is expected to discuss his work with *Debt AIDS Traffic Africa*, which aims to raise awareness and funds to fight the continent's war against the disease.

"With his tireless efforts and use of his celebrity to remind us of our moral duties as citizens of the globe, Bono has been a powerful force for change, galvanizing the action of presidents, countries and the general public," Penn president Judith Rodin said in a statement.

(AP)

Judge Allows Release of Guns N' Roses CD

A federal judge has rejected a bid by Guns N' Roses frontman Axl Rose and two of the metal band's former members to block Geffen Records from releasing a greatest hits compilation next week.

Rose sued the record label, a unit of Universal Music Group, last week, saying he never gave his permission to release the record or have its hits remixed for the new album. Former band members Slash and Duff McKagan, who haven't been in the band since the early 1990s, joined the lawsuit.

But on Monday, U.S. District Judge Dale Fischer denied Rose's request for an order blocking the release, scheduled for next Tuesday. The next hearing in the case is set for two days later.

(AP)



Guns n' Roses in 1992

Cats Recruits Local Felines



By Dong Nan

Local fans of Andrew Lloyd Webber will have the chance to be one of his cats when the musical is staged at The Great Hall of the People next month. The China Performing Arts Agency, announced last week that auditions would be held for 10 local "extra cats," who will prowl around the corners of the vast auditorium during the show.

These extra cats will need to be skilled singers, dancers and acrobats, be able to improvise and of course, possess the necessary feline qualities. Also, since they will be required to join in with the regular cats, they need to speak fluent English.

Those who think they have what it takes should call 8528 2509 to put their name down for an audition.



Wu Hongfei

Xingfu Dajie (Happy Street)

By Wang Yao

Xingfu Dajie (Happy Street) was formed in 1999, and quickly becomes one of the most talked about band on Beijing's underground music scene. They have just released their long-awaited self-titled debut album.

Lead singer Wu Hongfei is the indisputable soul of the band. Her singing style defies classification, and her voice is remarkable for its strength.

The songs featured on the album are full of feeling, wandering between ferocity and

fragility, with Wu's sometimes folk-like, sometimes naive rock sound, with occasional detours in the direction of new-age, creating a sense of conflict.

While the album is worth the wait, the band are at their best live. Their unconstrained, blazing rhythms and light and shade counterpoint always make for exciting gigs.

Line up:

Vocal: Wu Hongfei (A Fei)
Guitar: Geng Fang, Li Weiyan
Bass: Zhou Qi
Drums: Tian Kun

北京青年报

BEIJING TODAY

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Easy Elegance

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The Sanglaisi Real Stone Studio stores do not string jewelry fans along – they offer nearly 260 different kinds of beads in crystal, agate, lapis lazuli and other materials, so all shoppers are sure to find something they like.

The stores have been in business for over two years and earned reputations for good quality and service. The stocks of beads for self-stringing come in over 20 colors and shapes and lean towards the higher end of the spectrum, going for 3 yuan to 100 yuan a piece. On hand is everything needed to put together attractive necklaces and bracelets, from beads to clasps and strong string in over 30 colors, and even the hardware for making more delicate pendants and earrings.

"I was thinking about how to combine beautiful natural stones with traditional Chinese knots when I first came up with the idea of opening this kind of store. Using our strong thread, customers can make items just to their design, plus it's easy and very personal,"



Handmade bands strung with a few stones, 30 – 40 yuan.

said owner Wang Yaru. The stores also carry some special stretchy threads perfect for stringing attractive, comfortable bracelets.

According to Wang, all the stores' crystal and agate beads are imported from Brazil, a country known for its quality rocks. "China also produces these kinds natural stones, but they are of relatively poor purity and color, so we don't use them very much," she said.

Shop assistants help customers keep track of their selected beads, organize them for best effect and help string pieces of personalized jewelry for just 10 yuan. There are also some starter necklaces, handmade bands strung with a few stones, that cost 30 yuan each. Earrings are the easiest pieces to make and inexpensive, with silver earring hooks going for 10 yuan per pair.

Shoppers simply after some new jewelry without extra effort can choose from Sanglaisi's selection of reasonably-priced, pre-made brooches, bracelets of amber with silver hardware and other beautiful pieces made with all kinds of natural stones.

Where: Fourth floor, Beijing Modern Plaza, 40 Zhongguancun Dajie, Haidian

Third floor, Beijing Hualian (Anzhen) Store, Anzhenli, Area 5, Building 4, Chaoyang

Open: weekdays 9:30 am - 9:30 pm, weekends 9:30 am - 10 pm

Online shopping

Virtual Wampum Warehouse

By Chen Si

There are plenty of stores along the Chinese information highway that offer beads and other products for home jewelers, but arguably the best is Cnjewelry.com.

Cnjewelry.com stocks a dizzying variety of beads, from humble plastic spheres to elegant balls of crystal brought in from Austria or Czech Republic. The only trick is that prices are not provided on the site – shoppers have to call store operators to see how much these items cost.

Another appealing collection features beads and small charms made of Tibetan silver (a light silver alloy) and shaped like butterflies, eggs and leaves, as well as lustrous jade beads in the shapes of cylinders and sections of bamboo. Such high-end beads cost 2 yuan to 10 yuan each.

There are also some metallic fittings, such as long or round chain clasps in gold or silver, for making pieces oneself. They are inexpensive, about 3 yuan for each set. Cnjewelry.com not only provides materials and fittings, but also all kinds of tools needed by home jewelers. The selection includes needle-nose pliers, wire cutters and strong glue, all sold at reasonable prices.

Aspiring do-it-yourselfers not sure where to begin can check the web site's photos of beautiful finished models, or avoid the work and purchase those pieces directly. One attractive item is a Tibetan silver bangle (38 yuan) composed of beautiful purple beads connected by silver chain clasps. A little more razzle-dazzle is evident in a necklace of pearls and jade beads (26 yuan) strung on a brown thread and tied into carefully-spaced lustrous knots.



Bead Bonanza

Photos by Sun Haitao / Tian Xiaotong / Li Shuzhuan

No-Sweat Beads

By Lisa Lee

The second floor of the Arts and Crafts Mansion on Wangfujing is home to a daunting collection of beads and beaded jewelry. More than 1,000 items are on offer, including valuable beads made from Brazilian crystal and Burmese jade.

Most of the crystals for sale are imported as raw rocks and then processed in this country. Crystal beads come in all kinds of colors and styles, though most are cut into round, oval, cone and diamond shapes. They are not sold separately, as in other local stores, but in long strings that range in price from 150 yuan to 5,000 yuan depending on size and material. The most expensive, and most striking, string in the bunch is made of bright, lustrous crystal naturally streaked with golden veins that fetches a hefty 6,800 yuan.

For a more distinct Chinese feeling, check out the store's all-



Green Spirit crystal bracelet, 2,607 yuan



Jade flower bracelet, 150 yuan

but-unrivaled selection of jade beads, valued for their beauty and reputed ability to ward off evil. They come in hundreds of sizes and shapes, carved to look like different animals, flowers, deities and other symbols of purity, prosperity and power. Some of the most attractive pieces draw directly from ancient Chinese legends, such as the large beads that depict dragons and phoenixes, five celestial mice carrying treasure to the poor and a golden rooster announcing good news. Prices vary according to weight and quality, with pieces fetching anywhere from 5 yuan to 19,800 yuan.

Skilled craftswomen are on hand to help customers design and string together beautiful jewelry pieces exactly to their liking at no extra charge.

Where: Second Floor, Arts and Crafts Mansion, Wangfujing, Dongcheng
Tel: 6528 8866 ext. 2043, 6528 8866 ext. 2168

Open: 9:30 am - 9:30 pm

All that Glitters

By Chen Si

Hidden inside the sprawling Tiancheng Market in Haidian, the Jinyuange Shop manages to draw a steady flow of customers with its impressive selection of crystal beads in all kinds of colors and shapes, ready to be threaded into beautiful and personal necklaces, bracelets, brooches and earrings.

Jinyuange also stands out because its owner and manager, Chen Disheng, is a man. "It's a pretty good job, because each piece I make is different. People especially like crystal jewelry because it is shiny and because crystals are symbols of friendship, wealth and prosperity," Chen said.

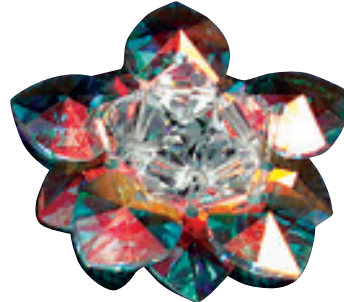
Finished pieces range in



Blue crystal necklace, 80 yuan

price from 10 yuan to 600 yuan. Necklaces, earrings and bracelets are the most popular and most come priced under 50 yuan, while barrettes and pins tend to be a bit more expensive because they are harder to make.

Yet there is no reason to



Crystal brooch, 100 yuan

rely just on Chen's trained eye and hands. Customers can get exactly what they want by choosing beads in a wide range of colors, sizes and shapes and materials and then having them put together into pieces of their own design. Chen said a customer once came to him with a picture of a 600 yuan necklace she had seen at a mall and asked him to do his best to replicate it. He ended up making a nearly identical piece that cost only 160 yuan.

All the crystal beads on offer come from a branch of noted Austrian crystal-maker Swarovski in Guangzhou. Chen flies south every month to collect beads and learn about new, fashionable jewelry styles, which he replicates once back home. A piece inspired by his latest trip is a necklace formed from three layers of crystal beads (190 yuan), an elegant work in white and purple.

Where: No. 483, Tiancheng Market, Zhongguancun Nandajie, Haidian

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By Wang Xiaoxiao

Many all food courts tend to be hard to tell apart, most housing similar line-ups of the usual fast food suspects. While there are plenty of mega chains operating in the Gourmet Street dining strip on the bottom floor of the Malls at Oriental Plaza, this hub of quick, convenient eating manages to stand above the fray for two reasons.

One of the area's strong points is sheer variety – the two food lanes that run around a total of 100 meters long offer shoppers a wide range of choices, from standard burgers to decent Japanese, Thai and Chinese food.

The area's second grabber is its sweets selection. Thanks to the presence of several dessert specialists, such as Beard Papa's Pipin' Hot Cream Puff, McDonald's Dessert House, Kiss 'n Bake, Dairy Queen and Fuzion Smoothie Cafe, a comfortable place for a needed break or restorative sugar fix is never far away.

Snackfood Alley



Regular cream puff, 6 yuan

Beard Papa's Pipin' Hot Cream Puffs

Finding this small stand on the food street is easy – just follow your nose. The ovens at the yellow Beard Papas stall emit a heady, sweet fragrance that gets shoppers lining up every day. Beard Papa has only been operating for around two months, but its business is bursting on the strength of its special



confection.

A dessert of French origins, the cream puff as made at Beard Papa's is an airy pastry ball filled with rich cream, all made in an assembly line created in Japan. The pastry shells are flown in to China frozen and then baked fresh on site. The secret to the unusual texture of these cream puffs is their two-layer shells. The inner layer is a puff pastry shell, while the outer surface is more like piecrust.

The cream is a kind of whipped custard made of Mengniu milk flavored with a heavy dose of premium vanilla beans brought in from Madagascar. The staff run through the nearly two-hour process of making the cream four to six times a day.

The crisp, light puffs are injected with custard by order before customers' eyes to prove freshness and then dusted with powdered sugar or coated with chocolate. The regular puffs go for 6 yuan a pop and the chocolate versions 8 yuan.

To get the most out of a puff, be sure to eat it immediately, or at least on the same day it's made, as Beard Papa's does not taint its products with any preservatives.

Where: CC09/CC11, Gourmet Street at Oriental Plaza, No.1 East Chang'an Avenue

Open: 9 am - 9 pm

Fuzion Smoothie Cafe lounge

This Singaporean-based chain was one of the establishments quietly introduced "smoothie" culture to the capital last year. Smoothies, of course, are frozen drinks made of fruit that offer healthy, delicious alternatives to more fattening sweets. Fuzion serves up tasty smoothies based on real fruit as well as a selection of fresh salads, sandwiches and fruit sorbets.

Manager Dou Jianjun takes particular pride in Fuzion's unique IQF (individual quick frozen) technology. This technology allows fresh fruit to be preserved through instant freezing to prevent loss of nutrition, moisture or flavor. "All our fruit is frozen right after it is picked at the peak of ripeness, so you can say that our customers end up drinking the very freshest fruit," she boasted.

All kinds of fruit, from mangoes and pineapple to oranges, blueberries and strawberries are given this flash freezing treatment and ready to be blended into thick shake-like drinks.

The fruit flavors in Fuzion's full line of smoothies are intensified with the addition of aloe nectar. Some drinks are blended with premium low-fat frozen yogurt to make more substantial treats.

The smoothies are separated into four categories and range in price from 22 yuan to 42 yuan. Classic smoothies are made of fruit, nectar and frozen yogurt, while Frazzles contain more fruit and Pure Fruit drinks are light concoctions of fruit, nectar and natural fiber. Diners out for a little more punch can select a Liquor smoothie, juiced up with a shot of booze or wine, or request a 2-yuan liquid nutritional supplement claimed to boost immunity, energy level or memory.

Where: CC15, Gourmet Street at Oriental Plaza

Open: 9 am - 9 pm

Tel: 8518 6369

Average cost: 30 yuan per person



Frozen fruit ready for blending

Kiss 'n Bake

Operating at many local subway stations and shopping centers, Kiss 'n Bake has become a popular bakery in the capital. The Oriental Plaza outlet reaches a bit further, however, by providing comfortable chairs and attractive benches, making it a fine place to rest the feet after a serious shopping session.

The store's signature cheesecakes and other confections are delivered fresh daily and all product over one day old is discarded. While they do not do the baking, store staff can decorate customers' cakes to order in a wide variety of styles and cakes can be cut into many different kinds of sizes and shapes.

One of Kiss 'n Bake's claims to fame is the use of premium ingredients brought in from all over the world, particularly from France, Switzerland, New Zealand and Belgium, all countries known for their chocolate and dairy products.

One of the store's best selling items is the 9.9-yuan, 60 gram slice of classic cheesecake. This hunk of pure baked goodness is small enough to hold in one hand, but rich and packed with enough calories to replace a whole meal – a choice that some busy (and unhealthy) employees in the office towers above sometimes make.

Kiss 'n Bake cheesecakes range from the simple, such as the classic or popular strawberry versions, to the extravagant, like the ultra-rich tiramisu variety. The New York Cheesecake is particularly recommended for its delicious cookie crust. The price for a 6-inch diameter cheesecake of any flavor is 88 yuan.

Where: BB96, Oriental Plaza

Open: 9 am - 9 pm

Tel: 8518 6994



Strawberry cheesecake, 88 yuan

Photos by Sun Haitao / Cong Feng



Rose mousse, 7.8 yuan

Xishu Douhuazhuang

By Dong Nan

Xishu Douhuazhuang at Oriental Plaza is not a fast food outlet or a stall, but a full-blown branch of this chain of popular local Sichuan restaurants. Sichuan cuisine is known for its intimidating spice levels and Xishu Douzhuang abides, but also offers some tamer, yet still authentic, dishes.

The house specialty is *douhua*, a kind of bead curd made of special soymilk and put through a complicated process that renders it softer, silkier and more delicate than normal tofu. This special soy treat shows up in more than a dozen dishes, such as the *xishu douhua ji* (chicken soup with fresh douhua) and *xishu douhua yu* (fish soup with fresh douhua). Both are made of soup with chicken or fish meat in which the douhua is boiled until it absorbs the flavor, and priced at 18 yuan for a small serving and 48 yuan for a large.

Another common ingredient made special at Xishu Douhuazhuang is



Chicken soup with douhua (xishu douhua ji, 48 yuan)

cabbage. In the tasty *kaishui baicai* (cabbage soup with scallop, 48 yuan), prime chunks of cabbage are stewed in a thick soup along with some dried scallops and crab meat. A bit easier on the



Boiled hearts of cabbage (yipin caixin, 18 yuan)

mushrooms.

In general, fungi are a good choice at this underground restaurant. The cream of the crop is probably the *yinguo xian yeshan jun* (boiled mushroom with soup in silver boiler, 68 yuan), a delicious mix of mushrooms at a somewhat stiff price.

Where: CC16, Gourmet Street at Oriental Plaza

Open: 9 am - 9 pm

Tel: 8518 5388

Average cost: 40 - 100 yuan per person

Kaiten Sushi

By Dong Nan

Of the several Japanese-theme restaurants in the Oriental Plaza food street, Yuanfu Kaiten Sushi is the largest and most impressive, but still boasts reasonable prices.



In the center of the restaurant is a large conveyor belt on which plates of freshly-prepared sushi circle until they are grabbed by hungry diners. Prices are determined by plate color and range from the 4 yuan white plates to the 16 yuan yellow plates.

Inside the belt, Yuanfu Kaiten's sushi chefs put together all kinds of rolls and raw fish specials, based on roe, yellow abalone, shellfish, tuna, cucumber and other standard ingredients, all fresh and reasonably priced.

For diners put off by raw fish, the restaurant offers a range of other Japanese favorites such as grilled eel on rice (*manyufan*, 25-35 yuan) and a few kinds of Japanese noodles. These kinds of non-sushi items do not show up on the belt and must be ordered off the menu.

All tables are equipped with free *wasabi* mustard and soy sauce for mixing the classic accompanying sauce for sushi and sashimi, and diners can drink as much free barley tea as they like. Overall, Yuanfu Kaiten's version of fast food is more expensive than Western-style options, but makes up for it by being healthier and tastier.

Where: CC12, Gourmet Street at Oriental Plaza

Open: 9 am - 9 pm

Tel: 8518 6186

Average cost: 60 - 100 yuan per person



Big rolls, 12 yuan

M
ovies**Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King**

While Frodo and Sam continue on their quest to destroy the One Ring, unaware of the treacherous path Gollum is leading them on, their former partners in the fellowship gather allies for battle against the dark lord Sauron.

Where: cinemas across town **When:** till March 31

**Anyang Ying'er (The Orphan of Anyang)**

Forty-year-old Dagang (Sun Guilin) has lost his factory job. While eating at a street stand, he encounters and takes in an abandoned baby accompanied by a note indicating that whoever cares for the child will get a stipend of 200 yuan a month. The money comes from the mother, Yanli (Zhu Jie), a prostitute who lives in an environment unsuitable for raising a child. This is the directing debut of 37-year-old Wang Chao, a former assistant to Chen Kaige.

Where: Hart Salon, 17 Sanlitun Nanjie (across from Durty Nellie's), Chaoyang District **When:** March 20, 8 pm **Ad-**

mission: 30 yuan (includes a drink) **Tel:** 6504 6010

Hong Xifu (Red Suit)

This is a story about a family. Shi Jie is a foreman in a state-owned factory and his wife works in a pig slaughterhouse. Their teenage daughter prefers playing basketball and hanging out with her friends to studying. Money is tight but they are happy.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District **When:** March 19, 20 8 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 13901134745

The Hours

In 1951, Laura Brown, a pregnant housewife, is planning a party for her husband, but all is not as happy as it seems. Clarissa Vaughn, a modern woman living in present times is throwing a party for her friend Richard, a famous writer dying of AIDS. These two stories are simultaneously linked to the work and life of Virginia Woolf.

Where: B2M, next to the canal in front of Ditan Park South Gate **When:** March 22, 8 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6426 1091



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M
usic**China National Symphony Orchestra**

China National Symphony Orchestra is to perform Beethoven's *Leonore*, Liu Dunnan's Piano concerto, and *Harold in Italy* by Berlioz.

Conducted by American-Chinese Li Xiaolu.

Where: National Library Concert Hall, 33 Zhongguancun Nandajie

When: March 20, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 30 – 380 yuan

Tel: 6848 5462

Ballet Music

China Philharmonic Orchestra is to perform Giuseppe Verdi's Prelude to Act I from *La Traviata*, and the *Triumphal March* from *Aida* as well as Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* and Smetana's *Dance of the Comedians*. Conducted by Chen Xieyang.

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall, Inside Zhongshan Park, Xi Changan Jie **When:** March 20, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 50 – 380 yuan **Tel:** 6559 8285

T
ravel**Beijing Hikers: Country lane**

The hike starts from a village called Ji Si (Auspicious Temple), and passes Liang Gen, a deserted village whose former occupants moved to bigger villages long ago. The trail will also pass the steepest section of the Great Wall towards the end of the trip.

Where: pick up at Lido Hotel outside of Starbucks Cafe **When:** March 21, 8:30 am **Admission:** 200 yuan **Tel:** 13910025516

Su Rui
Solo
Concert

Having started her singing career 36 years ago, Taiwan pop queen Su Rui (Julie Su) is a household name in China. She is best known for her mellow and mature voice.

Where: Capital Gymnasium, Baishiqiaolu, Xicheng District **When:** March 27, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 120 – 1000 yuan **Tel:** 6835 4055

S
tage

Turandot, the Chinese Princess of Puccini's opera became well known to Chinese People after Zhang Yimou directed his version of it and staged it in both Italy and China. This time, a Peking Opera version of *Turandot* comes to the Beijing Stage. Performed by China Peking Opera House.

Where: Poly Theater, 1/F Poly Plaza, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** till March 21, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 120 – 580 yuan **Tel:** 6500 1188

Peking Opera:
TurandotJ
ams**Night of the Punk**

Featuring Naozhuo (Bad Brain), one of the best underground punk bands in Beijing, together with a new band Shijie Zhongzhi (The End of the World).

Where: Get Lucky, 1 Dongfang Qicai Dashijie, Laitai Jie Chaoyang district **When:** March 20, 9:30 pm **Admission:** 40 yuan **Tel:** 8448 3335

**CMCB**

Beijing based Hip-hop band CMCB is to play, together with DJ Shorty-S.

Where: Lush, Second floor, Huaqing Jiayuan, Chengfulu, across from the Wudaokou light-rail station **When:** March 23, 9 pm **Admission:** 20 yuan **Tel:** 8286 3566

Nostalgia Music

Tonight DJ Delta plays top rock, punk and pop songs of the 80s and 90s.

Where: Vibes, 4 Jiuxian-qiao Lu, just north of Beijing Tokyo Art Projects **When:** March 19, 10 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6437 8082

E
xhibitions**Solo Exhibition of Liu Wenquan**

Liu Wenquan was born in November, 1956 in Sichuan Province. Currently he is a professional artist and many of his works have been acquired by corporate and private collections around the world.

Where: Wan Fung Art Gallery, No.136 Nanchizi Street, Dongcheng District **When:** March 21 – 25, 10 am – 9 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6523 3320

The Inca Empire

An exhibition of photographs of the capital of the Inca Empire at the beginning of the 20th century by Peruvian master photographer Martin Chambi and his contemporaries, held by the Embassy of Peru.

Where: Today Art Gallery, 9 Wenhui Beilu, Handian **When:** March 20 – 30, 9 am – 5 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6221 6146

Yu Xiaodong Solo Exhibition

Features Yu Xiaodong's oil paintings. The painter lived in Tibet for a long time, and all his paintings are about the people and lives there.

Where: Qin Gallery, 1-1E Enjoy Paradise, Huawei, north of Beijing Curio City, Chaoyang District **When:** till March 31, Daily 9:30 am – 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8779 0458

Made in Beijing

In his artworks, from *Standards for Youth*, *Standard Family*, *Standards for Chubbiness* and *Charm to Standards for an Ideal Residential Compound*, Sichuan artist

Yang Mian addresses the issue of changing standards that are shaping the face of social and cultural life in China. Yang questions and reflects on different kinds of standards through his paintings and installations: "How has our life been changed? What kind of changes do we need?" Are the standards we have established what we really want? In this exhibition, Yang Mian will exhibit his iron construction models and oil paintings.

Where: Red Gate Gallery, Dongbianmen Watchtower, Chongwenmen **When:** March 21 – 28, 10 am – 5 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6525 1005

**Zhang Wen Solo Exhibition**

Features Zhang Wen's ink painting series. Most of the works are sketches of Beijing historical scenes.

Where: National Art Museum of China, 1 Wusi Dajie **When:** March 23 – 28, 9 am – 4 pm **Admission:** 20 yuan **Tel:** 6401 2252



One of Liu Wenquan's paintings



Peach

Purple lilac



Tulip

Spring flowers have a special significance that increases in direct proportion to the distance one lives from the equator. Blossoming plum and cherry trees are incontrovertible proof that winter is over and summer is just around the corner.

Beijing has many parks, famous and not so famous, that attract flower lovers by the scores from late March to May every year. This week, *Beijing To-day* presents ten of these to our readers.



Oriental cherry



Chinese tree peony

By Yu Shanshan

Chinese tree peony at Jingshan Park

With its huge blossom and splendid color, mudan, or Chinese tree peony, is traditionally taken as a symbol of peace and prosperity, and is known as the "king of flowers."

Jingshan Park has hosted the Mudan Festival since 1997. This year, the show will open in mid-April, and will feature 35 kinds of spring flowers, including 120,000 tulip blossoms, together with 20,000 hyacinths, marigolds and petunias.

The optimum time to see Chinese tree peonies is around late April to early May, when 20,000 peonies will blossom in the park.

The peonies at Jingshan Park include not only famous varieties from the imperial garden within the Forbidden City, but also Luoyang mudan, Heze mudan, and peony strains from Gansu, Jiangsu, Zhejiang provinces, and from Japan.

Where: At the back of the Forbidden City

Open: 7 am - 8 pm

Admission: 10 yuan

Peach Blossoms at Beijing Botanical Gardens

No botanical garden in northern China matches Beijing's for size and variety. Sprawling at the foot of the Fragrant Hills in the north west of Beijing, the Botanical Gardens (Zhiwuyuan) is home to 4,500 kinds of plants on display in nearly 20 exhibition zones.

The sixteenth Peach Blossom Festival opens in the Ornamental Peach Garden in early April and runs till the end of May. There are more than 40 varieties of peach trees cultivated here, including red-white, golden-speckled and "longevity" peaches.

During the festival, winter jasmine, flowering plum, weeping forsythia, white magnolia, lilacs and oriental cherries will also be in blossom.

Where: East of Fragrant Hills Park

Open: 7:00 am - 5:00 pm

Admission: 5 yuan

Oriental Cherry at Yuyuantan Park

The oriental cherry garden is in the northwest of Yuyuantan Park, and contains some 2,000 cherry trees. Since 1989, an annual Oriental Cherry Festival has been held here every April.

Oriental cherries are divided into two main varieties - early cherry and late cherry. In late March, the early cherry blossoms are in bloom. These are five-petal flowers, mostly light pink or white,

such as the sargent cherry, wild cherry, somei-yoshino cherry, and weeping cherry.

When the flowers of the early cherry blossoms fall and new leaves sprout, the multi-petal late cherry begins to blossom. These include Oshimazakura, Kanzan, Ichijo and Fugenzo, as well as one specimen of the extremely rare Ukon.

The west gate of the park, on the West Third Ring Road, is the nearest entrance to the oriental cherry garden. If you come in



Peach



Yulan magnolia



Peony

from the south or east gates, you can hire a paddle boat to get there.

Where: Between the West Third Ring Road and Sanlihe Lu, north of the Military Museum and the Millennium Monument.

Open: 6 am - 8:30 pm

Admission: 2 yuan

February orchids and lilac at the Temple of Heaven

Eryuelan, or February orchid, blooms during the early spring in Beijing. The blue wildflowers can be seen in many of the city's parks, but the Temple of Heaven boasts the largest area of February orchid. It is especially abundant under the old cypress west of Qnian Dian (the Hall of Prayer), covering an area of 40,000 square meters.

The Temple of Heaven also boasts the biggest area of lilac woods in Beijing. Over 300 white lilac plants can be seen on the west side of the Hall of Prayer, covering an area of 4,000 square meters, most of which were planted 40 years ago. Five-petal lilacs are said to have the same auspicious qualities, and are just as rare among the four-petal variety, as four-leaf clovers.

Where: South of Chongwenmen

Open: 6 am - 7:30 pm

Admission: 35 yuan

Tulips at Zhongshan Park

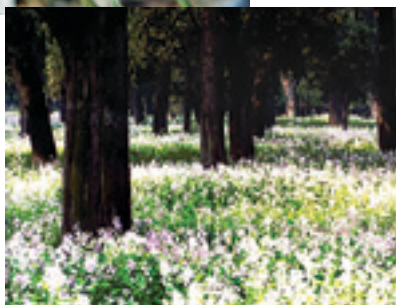
Zhongshan Park, adjacent to Tian'anmen Square, holds an annual spring flower show, with an emphasis on tulips. This year will see the park's ninth Tulip Garden Party, held from late April to May 7. As many as 300,000 tulips in 55 varieties, both in the ground and in pots, are on display.

Apricot



Winter jasmine

February orchids



Blossoms

During the Tulip Festival, 40 rare strains of tulip will be on display indoors at Huifang Garden, as well as 60 rare strains of winter jasmine and azaleas from Dandong, Liaoning province, at Tanghuawu.

Where: Chang'an Avenue, just west of Tian'anmen

Open: 6 am - 9 pm

Admission: 3 yuan

Apricots at Badachu Park

"Chunshan Xinglin"

(Apricot woods in spring hills) is one of famous scenes of Badachu Park, south of the Fragrant Hills. In early April, over 20,000 apricot trees blossom in white and pink. A cable car offers a birds-eye-view of the apricot blossoms on the hills.

There are eight Temples and Shrines at Badachu, one of which dates back to the Tang Dynasty; the 13-story Lingguang Pagoda is said to contain one of Buddha's teeth. Inside the courtyard is an apricot tree dating from the Yuan Dynasty.

Where: South of Fragrant Hills Park

Open: 5:40 am - 6:30 pm

Admission: 10 yuan

Flowers, flowers everywhere ... Beihai Park

On the east side of the White Dagoba Hill are flourishing woods, rockeries, caves, a stone bridge, a memorial archway, Zhizhu Hall and Jianchu Pavilion, comprising the Qiong Dao Chun Yin (Jade Islet's Spring Shadow), one of the eight beautiful scenes of ancient Beijing. The amusement park has been removed, making way for more flowers, including ornamental

peaches, weeping forsythia, peony, winter jasmine and lilacs.

Taoranting Park

Winter jasmine is blossoming in Taoranting Park. Yulan magnolias, peaches, forsythia, and baubinia flowers are all on the verge of flowering. April and May is the season for honeysuckle and ornamental peaches. In late spring, Manchu rose, lilac, purplevine and paulownia blossom, and in early May, some rare flowers like dwarf cherry, fringetree and pearlbushcan be seen.

Summer Palace

Regular visitors to the Summer Palace will be familiar with the best route to see all kinds of flowers in the park. Not far from the east entrance, yulan magnolia are planted in the quadrangle Leshoutang. From there, turn off the main tourist route that leads to Foxiangge (Temple of Buddhist Virtue), and instead walk along the bank of Kunming Lake, first southward, then westward to the west bank. On the way, and especially along the west bank, bunches of exuberant peaches blossom in white and light pink. Then on the north bank, climb the back hill, which offers a splendid view of winter jasmine growing along the road.

Xiangshan Park (Fragrant Hills)

Winter sweets, winter jasmine, apricots, peaches, Chinese flowering crabapples, and lilacs blossom one after another at the Fragrant Hills in spring. Visitors can appreciate winter sweets in the valley of Meiyuan, and walk through the weeping forsythia on the western hill slope, lilac at Xiaobailou and Yuhuaxiu, yulan magnolias in the pine woods, and Chinese tree peony and Chinese flowering crabapples near the north entrance. Wild flowers such as eryuelan, indigofera kirilowii and deutzia grandiflora can be seen in late spring and early summer.